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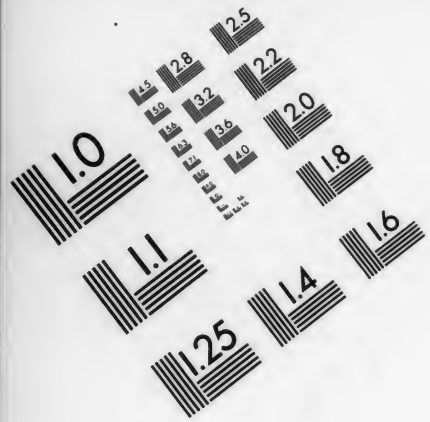

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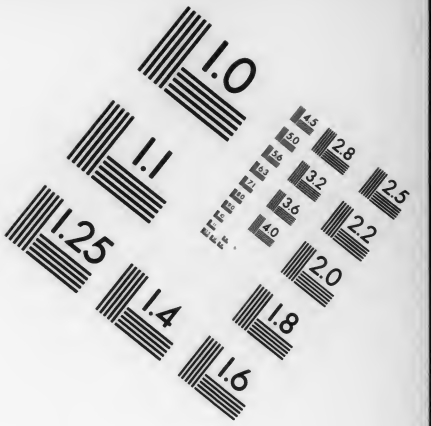

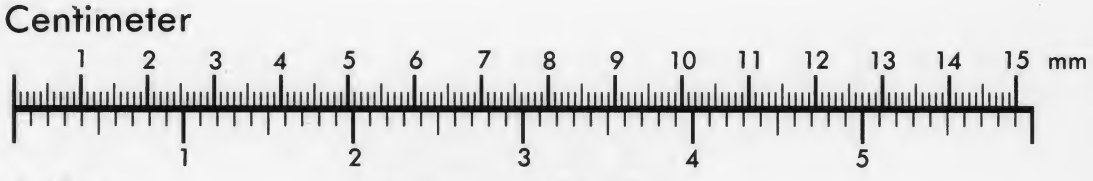

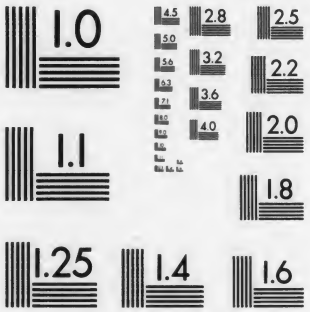

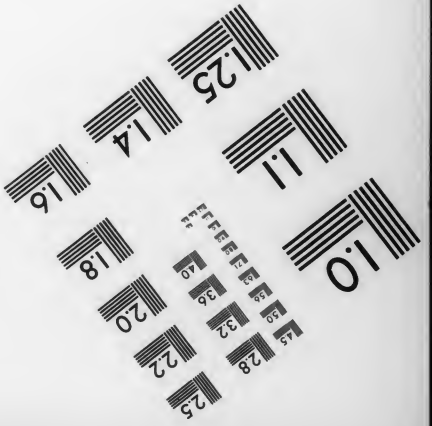

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THOUGHTS UPON THOUGHT.

THOUGHTS

UPON

THOUGHT.

FOR YOUNG MEN.

IN THREE PARTS.

J. Griggs Hewlett

"Γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νίκητε τὸν πονηρὸν."

"I write to you, young men, that *ye may overcome* the evil one."

LONDON:
JOHN SNOW, PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1843.

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PREFACE.

THE subject of this little volume is one of immense importance to every individual. Thoughts are the germs of character and the indices of the mind. Young men of the present day, for whom these pages are specially intended, are surrounded with facilities for their intellectual and moral improvement, which have never been equalled in any by-gone period of this country's history. Among these facilities, are the cheap general literature of the day,—the books specially prepared for those who are budding into manhood,—the valuable libraries in some respectable houses in the Metropolis,—the lectures publicly addressed, and the trembling anxiety manifested by the advocates of truth to allure and guide the expanding mind into the ways of wisdom and holiness.

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The Writer has ever felt a deep concern in the welfare of young men, and that concern has been augmented by a knowledge of the snares, temptations, dangers, and difficulties to which they are exposed. He knows how contagious is the influence of social intercourse, whether it be injuriously or beneficially exercised. He has witnessed, with much pain, the exertions which have been made, and are now making, to bring the minds of young men under the bias of the most degrading and impure principles, and to entangle such minds in the meshes of a "philosophy falsely so called."

He avails himself of this opportunity to express his deep sympathy with those young men, who, *by late hours of business,** are prevented giving that time and that attention to their intellectual and religious culture, which these invaluable objects require, and which they would gladly give to them, if permitted. And when it is known, that in the drapers', and other shops of the Metropolis, the physical,

* Sect v. p. 20.

intellectual, and religious interests of thousands, are *victimized* by this *late-hour system*, no benevolent mind will withhold its influence to suppress a system, which, by its demand for so much *time* for labour, leaves none to be devoted to the health of the body, of the mind, or of the immortal soul. Lectures to young men would be more frequent, and those already established more numerously attended, if this *late-hour* system were abolished. Where this system is relaxed, he expresses his hope that young men will improve, and *not abuse* the privilege. It is not a question of sect or party, but one of principle, humanity, and religion. It is the great barrier to both intellectual and moral improvement. Such improvement, would soon produce its happy results on the character and influence of young men.

The Author withholds his name from this publication, because he is unwilling that partiality on the one hand, or prejudice on the other, on account of his position in the church and the world, should exert any influence in reference to the volume.

The Author has entitled this volume "Thoughts," because it contains suggestions rather than complete and finished discussions. He hopes that the suggestions will be considered, and carried out to their legitimate conclusions.

The Book is put forth with a most humbling consciousness of its many defects,—with an earnest desire that it may "win some" "to think soberly," and with a reliance on Him whose blessing alone can make any effort successful. That it may be the means, in the hand of God, of promoting the present and eternal happiness, and especially of securing the best interests of *Young Men*, is the fervent and importunate prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

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THOUGHTS UPON THOUGHT.

PART I.

ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN IN RELATION TO HIS THOUGHTS.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS. — THE DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THOUGHT; WHAT ARE, AND WHAT ARE NOT, A MAN'S OWN THOUGHTS — GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON WHICH RESPONSIBILITY RESTS — THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY, IN RELATION TO THE THOUGHTS, STATED — THE CONNEXION OF THOUGHT WITH CONDUCT AND CHARACTER — CONSCIOUSNESS AND VOLITION, ESSENTIAL TO RESPONSIBILITY — THOUGHTS, THE OBJECTS OF GOD'S SPECIAL COGNIZANCE — THE LAW OF GOD LEGISLATES FOR THE THOUGHTS — CHRIST'S EXPOSITION OF THE LAW — EXPRESS DECISIONS THAT THOUGHTS ARE AMENABLE TO THE LAW OF GOD — THE REVOLUTION OF THE THOUGHTS IN CONVERSION — FACTS, SHOWING THAT THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD HAS BEEN ADMINISTERED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF MAN'S ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HIS THOUGHTS — THE EXTENT OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY; AN APPEAL TO YOUNG MEN.

THAT man thinks, and that his thoughts have a great influence on individual and social happiness, are facts readily admitted beyond any dispute. It is therefore of great importance that all the motives

and means, which may concur to promote the improvement of the thoughts, may be known and employed. Few things are more wonderful in variableness and achievement than the thoughts of man. Sometimes they appear like a chaotic mass,—the elements of good and evil mysteriously commingled: at other times they appear like the world when at its Creator's bidding, it rose into harmony and beauty. The former is most frequently the state of the thoughts where facilities for education and mutual discipline, have been either not attainable or not improved; the latter where a diligent perseverance has sought, obtained, and improved the means for acquiring a constant control over the mind and its varied resources. An exception may now and then appear, in a mind of but little culture, possessing extraordinary vigour, activity, and inherent love of order, marshalling and directing thoughts against some stronghold of error, with all the ease and effect, as a skilful and experienced general arranges and directs his forces against the fortifications of his adversary. A mind of this order, may enchant by the beauteous imaginings and harmony of genuine poetry, — delight by its touching and dramatic sketches, or convince by its lucid and conclusive

reasonings. Such is the province, and such are the doings of untaught genius. A mind overrating its original ability, prevents future improvement: while genius of the highest order most generally manifests an ardent desire to enhance its strength,—augment its resources, and prepare for active service on the arena of mental conflict. And those who can make no great pretensions to original superiority, may acquire an extensive influence over their own mental territory, and the region of mind in general, by an early, diligent, judicious training of the thoughts. By this means, the one talent of original mental power gains ten other talents, while the mind, possessing several talents, through a listless indifference and indolence, withers the hopes of expected superiority, sinks into a dwarfish diminutiveness, and retains only so much of mind as is enough to exempt the possessor from the sentence of idiocy. "The diligent hand maketh rich," is a proverb, not less applicable to mental than to material wealth. And in both, the slothful servant learns by experience, better than commentators can teach the fearful meaning of the parable, "that from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken from him."—*Luke* xix. 26.

Attention to the intellectual character of Thought, is of great importance, and every consideration urges it to be kept constantly in view, by young men, in their mutual intercourse; not only as a pleasing occupation of time, and as a means for mind knowing and appreciating mind; but as a stimulus and facility to a great end—mental improvement. It is by this,—that the influence of suggestion in the production of thought, — the nature of thought itself, — the connexion of one thought with another,—and the manner of regulating and controlling thought, will be better understood. It is almost impossible to think and write on thought without noticing to a greater or less degree, the intellectual processes involved in the production of thought. Yet, it is not so much with the intellectual, as with the moral character of thought, that these pages have to do.

Upon the varied circumstances, which contribute to the production of thoughts, and the process being perfectly consonant with those engagements, to which a large number of young men, in this country, and especially in the metropolis, are devoted, may here be introduced a passage from a celebrated living author. "Let there be fixed in their minds so many

ideas as might be imparted by a comparatively humble education (one quite compatible with a life of ordinary employment), and even involuntarily the thoughts would often recur to these subjects in those moments and hours when the manual occupation can, and actually will, be prosecuted with but little of exclusive attention. Slight incidents, casual expressions, would sometimes suggest these subjects; by association they would suggest one another. The mere re-action of a somewhat cultivated spirit against invading dulness, might recall some of the more amusing and elating ones; and they would fall like a gleam of sunshine on the imagination. An emotion of conscience, a self-reflection,—an occurring question of duty,—a monitory sensation of defective health, would sometimes awaken serious and solemn ones. The mind might thus go a great way, to recreate or profit itself, and, on coming back again, find "all the affairs of business unimpaired and flourishing." There are, doubtless, some occupations which will not allow of these pursuits of thought during the hours of business; yet there are many more, which are exceedingly favourable to the indulgence of trains of thought, without any damage to the secular business in which an

individual may be engaged. Yea, the very intercourse with society,—the developments of human character,—the habits and principles of men in different situations, and the predominant likeness in all, may often concur to induce and sustain a vigorous succession of thoughts.

SECTION I.

There are not a few minds, like plants of the mimosa tribe, so sensitive and so susceptible, as to vibrate and collapse at every passing object, and either retain for a long time the form and the state produced, or, invigorated by the action, promptly re-assume their accustomed appearance, only to recognize more quickly, and more keenly, the next agent that may approach. With this sensitiveness and susceptibility, so characteristic of many minds,—the number of agents ever at work,—the activity and observation inseparable from mind, it may be here inquired, Are all the thoughts which are recognized by the mind properly its *own?* or, Does the fact of the mere *existence* of a thought in a mind constitute its identity with that mind? These inquiries refer, not to the intellectual, but to the moral character of thought. The importance of these inquiries will be

readily admitted. The want of a satisfactory solution to them has produced, in some minds, a delusive self-complacency, and, in others, a sadness and depression for which no legitimate cause existed. The man of profane character has, in the hour of sickness, flattered himself that he was a pious man, because, amidst the howling tempest and raging billows, or in some other manifestations of the divine power, he has had some thoughts of God; and it may be at the grave of his child, or of his friend, he has *thought* of the soul and eternity. And the man of decided and eminent piety, has been deeply dejected and overwhelmed with doubt, because he has discovered unbelieving and rebellious thoughts, and concluded that his piety was a mere delusion; whereas these thoughts were not strictly his own, but the tares an enemy had sown; they were traceable to evil suggestions, from the lingering influence of a depraved nature within, from biliary derangement, or from influences without. The human mind is an ever-working machine, acted on by innumerable internal and external agencies. Thoughts, in almost countless variety, are the objects of its constant and perpetual cognizance. Some of the thoughts are transient and migratory, and no more

identify themselves with the mind itself, than any given sounds identify themselves with an instrument, after the strokes which brought them into being, and the vibrations in which they were heard, have subsided. The mind, moving in a region of thought, will uniformly exhibit its own moral affinity,—its delight to entertain those suggestions and thoughts which congenialize with its own character. If the mind be under a holy bias, it will spurn and reject evil thoughts, while the same mind will cherish pure and hallowed thoughts, with a delight proportionate to the aversion it displayed in rejecting thoughts of an opposite character.

The thoughts which are properly a man's own thoughts, are those which he approves, entertains, and cherishes.

SECTION II.

Though the object of this lecture is not to discuss the general question of human responsibility, yet it may be well to notice the general principles on which that doctrine rests. Among these are,

The existence of some perfect standard of moral excellence, viz. the mind or will of the Governor of the universe,—of which the code of morals

contained in the volume of revelation is a true transcript.

The right of God to govern his own world, and to have a measure of obedience from all intelligent agents, commensurate with their intellectual capacities.

The recognition and approval of this standard, and this right, by the human conscience.

The existence, both in the minds of barbarian and civilized men, of anticipation of some good when right has been done, and the apprehension of some evil when wrong has been committed.

The admitted character of man,—not a mere machine of circumstance, or the tool of an inevitable fate; but an intelligent, voluntary agent, capable of weighing motives, and of choosing, rejecting, and determining conduct.

The acknowledgment made by the members of every voluntary association of their individual obligation to obey existing laws, or endure known penalities. This is an admission of practical responsibility of man to man, and the same principle is applicable to man's responsibility to the supreme Governor.

The principles applicable to the question of human

responsibility generally, are not less so in their application to the subject under consideration. In addition to these, there are others which may specifically apply to the responsibility of man in relation to his thoughts.

SECTION III.

It is not contended that man is responsible for every migratory thought that passes through his mind, which may be like the cloud, for a moment flinging its shadow on the mountain top, and leaves no impression behind,—though even the most casual thoughts are not so fortuitous in their origin and uncertain in their character as many minds imagine, but are in some measure the result and index of former culture or neglect. But for those thoughts which are *recognized, approved, and cherished,* these are the germs of emotions, principles, actions, and character; and for these, man is responsible. Thinking is perpetual. And the conscious thinkings, are the attitudes and doings of the mind.

That man is responsible for his *conduct,* is admitted by many, who at the same time are unwilling to admit that he is responsible for his thoughts.

Such an opinion, is repudiated by the processes in the courts of human judicature, where the prime object is to search out the thoughts and designs of the accused, in any given case; as when one man has put to death another, if it can be proved that there was an entire absence of "malice prepense" on the part of the perpetrator of the deed, the simple act is treated as a venial offence; if, on the contrary, it can be shown that "malice prepense" prompted the deed, the perpetrator is convicted of a capital offence.

To those who imagine that man is accountable for his conduct only, and not for his thoughts, the following considerations are submitted.

SECTION IV.

The connexion of thought with conduct and character, needs to be only examined, and it will evidently appear, that the argument for the responsibility of thought, is manifold weightier than any argument for the responsibility of conduct, since the conduct is the mere palpable form, in which thought is embodied, while the thought is the spirit,—the vitality, —the essential moral being of that form.

Sometimes the conduct may very inadequately represent the sinfulness, or the moral excellence of the thought, it is employed to set forth; at other times the conduct may be viewed through a medium coloured by the prejudice, bigotry, or some other passion of the observer. All conduct, receives its character from the motive by which it is regulated; and the motive and the thought, are too closely allied to admit of separation in any moral estimate. The mind has its own actings; and these are supposed to be anterior to any external deeds. Words and deeds are but the second editions of works, originally produced in the regions of thought. Some thoughts, like some literary productions, are intended for private use, and never reach a second edition, while others pass through edition after edition with astonishing rapidity, and their influence moves the inhabitants of both hemispheres.

Thousands of thoughts are never breathed in air, nor embodied in deeds, which, however, are telling mightily in their influence on the mind in which they originate, and on the character to which they belong. They carry on the busy scenes of a life more real, more unsophisticated, and make impressions

more indelible than any of those scenes which meet the eye.

> "'Tis thus the soul speaks to itself alone:
> In that unspoken tongue, that mighty tone,
> Which never hand of flesh hath placed on scroll,
> Doth spirit speak to spirit, soul to soul!
> Losing of common tongues all exercise,
> On this, the lonely soul for cheer relies."

Aye, many of the highest enjoyments, and many of the deepest sorrows, are known in solitude and in the absorbing atmosphere of thoughtfulness. The moral complexion of thought, as it has been seen in retirement and reflection, has conveyed more valuable lessons on *self-knowledge* than any other instructor, apart from the Spirit of God. Man has judged of his own wickedness by "the mischief *he hath devised.*" And under the thrilling emotions produced by such a discovery, and the awful weight of responsibility involved, the king of Israel exclaimed, "I hate vain thoughts." He had known by painful experience, and had lamented with bitter repentance, the connexion of impure thoughts with conduct, which stained his character, wrecked his piety, and destroyed his peace. Hence his constant caution and prayer against vain and wicked thoughts,

to prevent the incipient process of sin, as the best means of preventing degrading and sinful conduct. "Obsta principiis," is an excellent maxim ever to be observed, in morals, as well as in medicine.

If the connexion of thought with conduct be admitted, and the thoughts are kept under a prayerful vigilance, the character and deportment, will be comparatively secure against all immoral seductions.

SECTION V.

Consciousness and volition are essential to constitute a responsible being. So far as they extend, and so long as they exist, so are the limits of responsibility. It may not be difficult to show, that thought, in all its variety, comes within their influence. Many, even the most spontaneous thoughts, are recognized, and their moral character discovered in their very earliest being, and others are deliberately and designedly originated, under the influence of a decisive *preference* for their character. For this purpose, books, companions, conversations and circumstances, are chosen or avoided, as they may be friendly, or inimical to the train of thought desired: for this purpose, the senses and the power of

suggestion are called to afford their aid. And the remedy for any train of thought, not approved, has ever been, to resort to a known method, by which a train of thought of an opposite character may be ensured.

Thus did the Psalmist: "I hate vain thoughts,"—these were his annoyance; "but thy law do I love,"—this law contained *God's thoughts,* and the introduction and meditation of these, induced thoughts more consonant with the best wishes and best principles of his heart. The poet and the philosopher adopt similar methods to secure a desired train of thought. How often has the flush crimsoned the cheek, from no external cause, but from the consciousness of certain thoughts working within; or, as often, the paleness of anguish has gathered on the brow, while the mind has recognized the vileness of its own thoughts,—has formed the resolve that they should perish or depart, and has groaned in the struggle, saying, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The mind illustrates the great secret of perpetual motion. Thought is perpetual. During the time of sleep, consciousness of mental operations and volition are suspended, and hence man is not accountable

for his dreams. In sleep, the mind runs on like a vessel drifted before the wind and tide, till it grates over some shoal, where the helmsman, roused from his torpor, looks to his compass and chart, and rights about his bark, and uses the breeze and wave to bring him to his desired haven: so the very dreams of morning, after the repose of night, close by consciousness returning to its office, and availing itself of the very impetus, that the mind has received to guide it to some wise and good purpose. With consciousness, accountableness returns. The exception from responsibility during sleep, establishes the rule of man's accountability during his waking hours. The same exception, may be put in for the idiot, the maniac, and the drunkard; and any man proving his title to any one of these characters, of course will be fully indemnified from responsibility of thought, word, and action. Though in reference to the idiot and maniac, the afflictive and mysterious dispensations of Providence are seen, yet in many cases the man who has given himself up to immoderate drinking, has deliberately and voluntarily disturbed his reason, acquired a temporary insanity, and secured to himself the inheritance of a confirmed idiocy. Young men, buoyant in your spirits,

vigorous in your reason, and vivid in your imaginations, if you would wish to live to a good old age, cheerful, intelligent, and influential, with "the hoary head, a crown of glory," beware of the least approach to the demon of intoxication, whose infatuating influence makes men suicides of their nobler and intellectual being,—of their immortal souls; the scatterers of pestilence and death in their social and domestic circles. Before "delirium tremens" has weakened the sentient faculty, before the first stupor has benumbed your fine and delicate feelings, hear the exhortation of the wise man. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, *and thine heart shall utter perverse things.*" Remember, that yielding to this sin, you seal up your past iniquities as a record against you,—curtail the period of your consciousness and volition,—close the avenues to repentance,

by rendering yourself incompetent to think consecutively and feelingly,—to pray sincerely and fervently, and to turn unto God.

And there is another sin which abounds in the Metropolis, where the multitude seems to afford a cover from the discovery of its existence, and an apology for its enormity,—a sin to which many are addicted,—a sin which, by its influence on the physical constitution of the man, enervates the brain and lessens the moral sensibility. It has been described by one who had known, by painful experience, its baneful effects in diminishing the power of consciousness and volition.

> "I waive the quantum of the sin
> The hazard of concealing;
> But oh! it hardens all within,
> And petrifies the feeling."

To guard against this sin, it is very desirable, that a virtuous attachment should be formed with a view to marriage. This is one means which may prevent the "illicit rove." And then to seek the guidance and influence of that Spirit, whose operations all concur to produce purity of thought, feeling, principle, and conduct. Let consciousness and volition, be preserved unimpaired and

invigorated, as the essential means to vigilance over the thoughts.

The increased enlightenment of the understanding and the conscience cannot be kept too constantly in view, that every facility to the legitimate and most salutary exercise of consciousness and volition may be afforded. Ignorance may be adduced as a palliation of sin, when it can be proved, that opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, have not come within the reach of the individual; but ignorance is an aggravation to sin, when it is evident, that such opportunities have been wilfully neglected. And hence the displeasure of Heaven against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "because ye have not known," even when all the richest facilities had been granted. Ample knowledge, will be a most valuable auxiliary to the enlightened use of consciousness and volition, in their relation to the thoughts. As Simonides said to Pausanias, so conscience says to every youth, "Remember thou art a man. And for man not to grasp at all laudable means for mental and moral improvement within his reach, is a dishonour to human nature and a disobedience to the divine; for as Heaven does nothing in vain, its gift of talents implies an

injunction of their use." Knowledge is the aliment and seed of thought. "For the soul to be without knowledge, is not good." The mind without knowledge is like the dreary morass or weedy desert,—the thoughts are few in number, or worthless in kind. None would admire a mind in this condition, in preference to one cultivated and producductive of sanative, vivifying, seminal thoughts,—thoughts that purify and improve,—thoughts that cheer and invigorate,—thoughts, that induce other minds to think easily and consecutively. "Get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

It is much to be regretted, that many intelligent and religious men do not allow the young men in their employment some portion of time for the purposes of mental and moral culture. Masters, in the end, would be the benefited party, by having an improved class of young men to attend to business.* And though the objection, may be urged,

* When the question of opening the London and Birmingham Railroad on the Sabbath, was discussed at a meeting of Directors in Birmingham, Mr. Sturge entered his protest against Sabbath-traffic, and rested the whole of his objection upon an argument to this effect: "If we induce men to violate the law of God, and to trifle with the highest authority, in serving us, on what ground can we expect those men to be obedient to our authority, and faithful to our trust?

that *some* would not improve leisure (if granted for the high and important purposes specified), yet, it is unreasonable, that *the many* should suffer for the indiscretion and unprincipled conduct of *the few*. If it be incumbent on young men to cultivate their mental and moral faculties, and none will deny this; then will it follow, that the employer who would voluntarily throw any obstacle in the way to the attainment of that end, incurs a fearful weight of responsibility. Next to the duty of seeking our own salvation, is the duty of affording to others (especially for those who are a part of the same household) every facility for securing their eternal welfare. And the mind, receives impressions more lasting and influential from the facts it witnesses, than from the lessons it hears. Young men will more powerfully feel their responsibility to their employers, when they witness their employers recognizing the higher responsibility of young men

We should be offering a powerful inducement to men of no principle to engage in our service, and be putting a great obstacle against the services of men of sound moral principle." Men in business, would find the young men most valuable who had time, and improved it, for their intellectual and moral culture, while the mere drudge of sixteen hours, would seek his pleasure in the tavern, or somewhere worse.

to God, who gave them their mind, and other talents, to improve. But, independently of the benefits to be derived both by the employer and the employed, the whole question must rest upon the responsibility of any individual, for the present and eternal welfare of those committed to his care. At least, so far as that welfare can be promoted and secured by his influence.

This digression may be tolerated, when the fact is admitted, that in all human probability, many who are now suffering from *the late-hour system*,* will soon become masters. And when this promotion takes place, and the once wearied, jaded shopman, gets out of his bondage, and begins to enjoy his liberty, he may need the exhortation, "Remember

* Thousands are languishing under the system; thousands under its action are dying; and thousands are, beneath its withering influence, sacrificing every prospect of eternal happiness. It may be a slight inconvenience to come early; but let this be endured: it is but small when weighed in the balances against the misery and degradation from which these thousands would be rescued. Let this be done by the customer, and the shops would necessarily be closed from want of a motive for keeping them open. Then would the draper's assistant, having leisure to mature his intellectual faculties and practise the precepts of virtue, become fitted to adorn society, and would assume his legitimate station amongst his fellow-creatures as a man and a Christian.—*Metropolitan Draper's Association.*

the stranger; for thou thyself wert a stranger in the land of Egypt." The elasticity of the human mind displays itself most when bounding from some scene of suffering under which it almost sunk, it seems (amidst scenes of enjoyment) almost to forget that such a class of sorrows ever had an existence. We look for sympathy, and we find indifference. Care need be constantly exercised against every tendency to diminish the delicacy of feeling,—the benumbing process commenced, goes on till consciousness loses much of its promptness, if not its power, in observing the thoughts.

SECTION VI.

The responsibility of man for his thoughts will further appear from the evidence afforded, *that God takes special cognizance of the thoughts, and, as the Moral Governor, expresses complacency or disapprobation towards them, according to their character.*

In this view, the inspired writers agree. Job says, "I know that no thought can be withholden from thee." David says, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." God expressed his approbation of David, when he said unto him, "It was well that

it was *in thine heart*" (in thy thoughts and designs) "to build a house unto me." And when Jehovah reproved the sinner, after enumerating the several transgressions, as though he traced them all to the thoughts of the heart, he said, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thee." "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." "For I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them." "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" To these might be added many other proofs of the divine cognizance of the thoughts; but these, for the present, may suffice.

It is a mean and unworthy conception of the Deity, that would limit his attention to words and deeds. Thoughts are the living creatures that talk and negotiate with God. He knows their language, and comprehends their every movement. This is his province—this his prerogative; and on this prerogative, none can, none dare encroach. The close observer,—the keenest scrutinizer of human nature,

often finds, that his guesses at the thoughts of his fellow-being are vague, indefinite, and erroneous. God never errs. He looks on the whole miscellaneous crowd of thoughts, and recognizes the character of each, as accurately, as if *it* were the only one on which his scrutinizing glance was fixed. How varied are the scenes, how diversified the attitudes of thoughts, presented to his observing eye. At one time thoughts are observed by him in penitential garb and posture,—directed towards his altar, and breathing petitions for pardon and forgiveness,—having no sacrifice but a broken heart,—and no incense but the sighs of penitence,—and no blood but that which the Gospel reveals and the eye of faith beholds; yet on such thoughts, the God of holiness bestows his smile, and says, "the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, I will not despise."

At other times, the thoughts are seen hovering round the throne of God, like children reciprocating a fond parent's love,—renewing their confidence,—gaining a higher moral elevation,—losing the cares of earth in Heaven's enjoyments,—and feeling the reality,

> "That a correspondence fix'd with Heaven,
> Is sure the soul's best anchor."

These communings of thought with God are not unnoticed. Thus Enoch "walked with God." And "he had this testimony that he pleased God." So may the thoughts be fervent in spirit serving God, while the hands are diligent in business. Here are thoughts, as they glow in a mind, or as they thrill in a heart, under a hallowing influence. The heart, untouched by this influence, presents a lamentable contrast. Such a heart the eye of God has searched out, and the result is recorded by one who ever spake *the truth*, and never gave utterance to detraction, flattery or folly. And this is the verdict recorded, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile the man."

There is scarcely a portion of the world in which some manifestations of the Godhead are not to be seen, except it be among the mazy thoughts of an unregenerated heart. That is the dreary spot from which angels turn away with the shudder of abhorrence,—the spot over which is written, "No God." It may be, that this language is intended to set forth the hostility of the depraved heart, which aims at nothing short of the annihilation of God, and the

thoughts, rallied by this hostility, exclaim "No God." "No God all his thoughts."*

These are some of the evidences, that God notices the movements of the thoughts, observes their hostile and mutinous positions,—derides their rage,—thwarts their puny designs, and asserts his sovereignty, saying, "There are many devices in a man's heart; but the counsel of the Lord shall stand." "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." And while his glance surveys every thought, is it not the most preposterous folly and presumption to allow the thinkings of evil to go on, and to acquire strength under the influence of the delusion, "God does not know, neither doth the Almighty consider it?"

Young man, pause, and consider. Thy thoughts are ever under the inspection of the God of light, of holiness, and of love. If you were in some assembly, where you observed the eye of a being fixed upon you; you knew him not; but from his supernatural appearance, and other reasons, you believed that his eye traversed "the path that no vulture's eye hath seen,"—the whole region of

* אֵין אֱלֹהִים כָּל מְזִמּוֹתָיו

thought and emotion,—and that your destinies were at his disposal. Whithersoever you went, and however you endeavoured to evade his glance, his eye seemed to pursue you; and even when you were turned away, and, according to all the ordinary laws of vision, the thing would be impossible, yet the eye seemed to be constantly before you,—its colour,—its brightness,—its expression,—its penetrating power,—all, as with a living reality, affected and perpetually troubled you. If you conversed with a friend,—engaged in your secular employment,—or retired into your chamber, this eye still pursued you, and presented itself with a full gaze upon you; if you slumbered, this eye occupied some conspicuous place in every dream,—and when you awoke, even in the darkness of midnight the glare of this eye exceeded the brightness of any star, and it met your opening eye, beaming on you with approbation, or frowning on you with displeasure. And, though you had no distinct views of the ultimate design of this unsleeping vigilance over you, yet, the consciousness of many evil tendencies and sinful propensities, and the knowledge of the supernal purity of the heavenly watcher, might have some influence in inducing you to regulate your thoughts in

accordance with the mind of him, whose eye and constant searching you could not escape. This is not an empty picture of the imagination. The eye of God is ever on your heart. It is the reality David believed and felt when he exclaimed, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Thoughts, are words and deeds before the all-searching Spirit. And shall not he who formed the ear, hear? And shall not he who formed the eye, see? And shall not he who searcheth the heart, record the closest transactions of the mind?

SECTION VII.

The law of God legislates for the thoughts, is another evidence of man's responsibility for his thoughts. The law of God is not a code of arbitrary exactions of a capricious tyrant, but the faithful transcript of his mind, who is The Right,—The Wise,—The Just,—The Holy One,—and to whom no other being can be compared. His law, is mind

legislating for mind. Whether mind be found enshrined in human or angelic form, it is subjected to the same great principles of unalterable *right*. In the publication of his law, the Great Legislator, in all his enactments, fixed his eye on the heart. He carries his law into the inner sanctuary of the soul, and asserts his claims, in the region of glowing thoughts and ardent affections. Amidst these, he engraves his law, in characters legible to the eye of conscience. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." While God receives with delight, the humblest offering that has in it, the energetic thoughts and the warm affections of the heart, he spurns from his presence the most costly sacrifice, that is presented by the hand of a cold formality, though this sacrifice, may seem to be in strict accordance with the letter of his own law. Hear his rebuke to his ancient people, when their hearts had wandered from him: "This people draw near unto me with their mouth, and honour me with their lips; but have removed their heart far from me." In this, was the odiousness of Phariseeism,—the things they did,—the service they performed,—the obedience they

rendered, wanted *the heart*, and this deficiency, no external austerities could supply. The lame, the halt, and the blind were prohibited for sacrifice. But external service, without the life-blood of thoughts and affections, is a dead carcase laid on God's altar. An old author has forcibly remarked on this subject, "The reason of all is, that God being the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and the kingdom of his Son a spiritual kingdom too, 'tis congruous both to the divine nature, and ours, which is a stricture of his, that his laws bear sway in our spiritual part, in our hearts and souls, our wills and affections; for would we have an infinitely glorious Spirit served by dull flesh and blood only, and not rather like himself, in spirit and in truth,—with those prime productions,—those first-born sons of the immortal Nature in us? Has God made us men, and would we pay him but the spiritless homage of the animal part of us? Has he implanted a noble and immortal principle of life and motion in us, and shall it not share in our obedience to him, and consequently in the guilt of the transgression of his laws? He is the natural Lord of both soul and body, has bought them with a price, and therefore, all the reason in the world, the obedience we pay

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him should be commensurate to the extent of his purchase; so that if we have any just abhorrence of sin, in the true latitude of the Divine construction of it, we must govern our thoughts, as well as observe measures in our words and actions."

These remarks are not to be restricted to the higher services of spiritual religion; but are to be applied to the every-day engagements of social intercourse, and to the workings of the solitary mind in reference to the visible and invisible worlds. The ordinary pursuits of life, gather around them the sanctity of religion, when the thoughts are in subjection to the will of God; and while subordinate ends are contemplated, yet the principal aim in which the thoughts converge, is the glory of God. Whether he serve or suffer,—whether he contend with temptations or pains, "he endures, as seeing him who is invisible." In painful contrast to this, is the wicked man, among whose thoughts, God is not; he, ruled by an absorbing selfism, maintains all the appearance of honesty and integrity,—without any respect to the law of God, or desire for his glory,—and passes in the world for a good moral man. This opinion is formed by those who can look only at the *surface of the man*, while He who

looks on the essential *man*,—the mind, the heart,—pronounces a different verdict, and regards him as *the great hypocrite*, whose whole conduct is at variance with the settled and abiding convictions of his conscience. Thus setting God at defiance;—*the man*, in the very face of God, tears up the law written on the fleshly tables of the heart. The law was made, not for the material instrument, but for the intelligent, thinking, feeling artificer, that models, and contrives, and completes his own designs.

SECTION VIII.

In all questions in jurisprudence, the difficulty is, in ascertaining the applicability of the existing law to the case under consideration. For this purpose the most learned commentators of the law are consulted. And these frequently supply conflicting opinions. We are favoured with an exposition of the law from the lips of Christ,—and for this no being in the universe so competent,—it is an exposition, free from any of the imperfections of human productions,—it is, in fact, the Legislator's exposition of his own law.

Here is no thunder's roar, no lightning's glare,

nor trumpet's sound, though these attended the first publication of the law. But here is the light of the "Sun of Righteousness." Here sins are seen in the light of God's countenance. The light Christ pours upon the law, exhibits sin in its very incipient forms,—of thought and emotion; these are seen, just as in the beams of the sun, are atoms seen,—the germs of existence, which otherwise would be hidden from ordinary observation.

Christ most plainly teaches that all the enactments of the law of God, were designed to take effect in the world of human mind,—this province of the vast empire of God. According to the nature of the Legislator, the nature of the obedience he requires. He is a spirit, and the spirit of man is the subject of his government,—and the obedience of the thoughts of the heart the proof of loyalty which he exacts. Two illustrations may be noticed,—the expositions of the sixth and seventh commandments. "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" (or, as the learned Lightfoot has rendered it, "obnoxious to the punishment"): "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

"Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Though in these two commandments the cases contemplated are different, yet the principle exhibited in the exposition, is precisely the same in both cases,—the application of the law to the thoughts, desires, and purposes of the heart. Unmerited hatred, and unprovoked anger, are transgressors whom God beholds with the abhorrence the murderer deserves. The impure desire,—the lustful passion, that revels with delight in the imaginary scene of violating the connubial bond, is itself the demon of adultery, and is branded with infamy.

The principle, the exposition of these two commandments developes, is that upon which the whole of the law of God proceeds. Every part of the moral government of God, is administered for the regulation of the thinking and immortal man. The thoughts, the inclinations, the devices, and purposes of the heart, are constantly under the notice of God; and the accountability of man for his thoughts is involved and recognized in all the dispensations of the divine will. The hypocrite may object to this;

the sincere man,—the man who is honest to himself, will, with a deep consciousness of numerous imperfections, rejoice that the most ardent desire of his heart is, that "the words of his mouth and the *meditations* of his heart may be acceptable in the sight of God;" that all his thoughts may be in perfect harmony with the will of God.

SECTION IX.

The great Legislator determines, *what are violations of his law*. We learn that many sins are almost confined to the mind. "The thought of foolishness is sin." Deceit, pride, ambition, malice, lust, uncharitableness, and some others, are sins chiefly committed by the thoughts and feelings; from their very odiousness, they are designedly kept from being embodied in word or deed, and their existence is found to be an under current, rather than a surface stream. But the eye of the Lord observes the deepest current of the soul,—the most secret flowings of thought. And when he looked down from heaven to observe the moral aspect of his new world, "he saw that the imagination of the thought of man's heart was only *evil* continually." A similar

estimate has been recorded at subsequent periods. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the *heart*, I try *the reins*," (the whole of the inner, immaterial, and intelligent man) "even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." These searching and disclosing operations, are sometimes carried on by the instrumentality of the word in the hand of the Spirit, and that word proves itself "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, ... and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." The reflections of the learned Philip Skelton on this subject well deserve attention. He says, "What a reproach is it to the human understanding and heart, that while the Author of all good, his works of creation and providence, and the interests of the soul, draw but a few, and those but rarely, to cold and almost useless meditations; the author of evil, and the means of making us now and for ever unhappy, employ all the rest of mankind in such meditations as rack their understandings to the utmost stretch of thought, and steep every thought in gall. With what thought does one

meditate on the object of his lust; another on that of his avarice; and a third on that of his ambition! How keenly is this man set a thinking by envy, and that by malice and revenge! How artful are their schemes! How vehement their pursuits! And why all this waste of thought, but for purposes as foolish as they are wicked?—Found by universal experience, in continual disappointments and vexations, to be as foolish as they are pronounced by the severe remorses of conscience to be wicked." Conscience is God's voice echoed in the soul; and that voice is not less censorious on the thoughts than it is on the deeds which come under its cognizance. The reproofs which conscience administers, produce wounds on the spirit of man, which may be healed, but the scars remain till the latest period of existence.

> " These, the part
> Perform of eager monitors, and goad
> The soul more sharply than with points of steel,
> Her enemies to shun or to resist."

The unwillingness of man to acknowledge his responsibility for his thoughts, induces many erroneous views, and involves him in difficulty, in attempting to account for many things in relation to his conduct.

The page of inspiration, clearly setting forth this responsibility, gives a solution to those difficulties, and corrects the gross error, of charging God with tempting man to violate his own law. " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." This is a concise, but complete history of sin. All sin is traceable to the thoughts,—the επιθυμιαι,—the desires of the heart. When these are predisposed to ignite, the smallest spark of temptation produces combustion; and that spark is often generated by the friction of the thoughts themselves. In this view the immortal Herbert agrees, and expresses it, in his own quaint style:—

> My thoughts are working like a busie flame;
> Until their cockatrice they hatch and bring;
> And when they once have perfected their draughts,
> My words take fire from my enflamed thoughts.

So that the thoughts are first in the transgression. How different with the pure and holy mind of

Christ, on whose crystal thoughts the tempter could produce no stain, though, during forty days and forty nights, he tried all the means that Satanic skill and malignity could suggest. In this case, where there were no sinfulness in the thoughts, yet the most unequalled force of temptation and *no sin;* while, in other cases, where there is the most possible remove from temptation, the thoughts produce sin, we cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that of the schoolmen who call the thoughts the "motus primò primi,"—the very first motions of sin.

SECTION X.

The revolution which takes place in conversion, consists, in the *whole intelligent and moral man being brought under a heavenly influence.* It is not a mere change of creed, or of rites and ceremonies,—not merely a reformation of the outward manners and conduct. It is a work carried on, in the inner chambers of the soul, affecting the will, the affections, and the thoughts. In this change, the Spirit of God revises his own law on the tablets of the heart,—writes it in deep and legible characters, in the very

dwelling-place of the thoughts, and couches the eye and restores the vision of thought to read it, and inclines the will to yield subjection. All this is intimated by the language of inspiration, in whatever aspect it presents this mighty change. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Again, the promise of God, in relation to this change, contemplates the existing defilement and pollution of the thoughts, and exhibits the operations of the Spirit, under an appropriate and impressive simile. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

If words have any meaning, these clearly show that the change is to take place in the thoughts, feelings, and principles of the soul.

Repentance is an important part of conversion; and this has to do principally with the thoughts.

The invitations and admonitions to its exercise, are directed to the thoughts. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and *the unrighteous man his thoughts,* and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Again, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the *thought* of thine heart may be forgiven thee." The question at issue, is assumed in these quotations. No man can repent of that for which he is not responsible, or concerning which, his responsibility is at all dubious. But, by the authority of the Supreme Judge, man is called upon everywhere to repent, and the specimens of repentance, recorded in sacred Scripture, give us ample evidence that the repentance required, is a sorrow for wicked thoughts, and a determination to maintain against them a constant resistance. It is therefore an obvious conclusion, that the responsibility of man for his thoughts, is an admitted fact by the sacred writers. The prayer of the genuine penitent recognizes this truth, when he prays, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." His strugglings with wicked thoughts are his keenest troubles, and his severest

conflicts. So felt the pious Herbert in reference to the workings of thoughts within.

> "We are the earth; and they,
> Like moles within us, heave, and cast about:
> And, till they foot and clutch their prey,
> They never cool, much less give out.
> No smith can make such locks; but they have keys;
> Closets are halls to them; and hearts, highways."

SECTION XI.

Many facts recorded, in connexion with the administration of the moral government of God, *show that God holds man accountable for his thoughts.* The inflictions of God's displeasure, can never exceed the limits of human responsibility. Thoughts, have been marked by these inflictions, and therefore they are within the precincts of human reponsibility.

During the sojourn of Christ on earth, the Jews gave many proofs of their erroneous views. Nor did they entirely vanish at the light of his instructions. Paul, who had previously been a Pharisee, said he had not known concupiscence, *or, desires to be sinful,* unless the commandment had said "Thou shalt not covet." Josephus, who was of the same

sect, seemed to have no deep sense of the *sinfulness* of thoughts and intentions, when he reprehends Polybius, the historian, for ascribing the death of Antiochus Epiphanes to sacrilege, because he had a purpose to plunder the temple, though he did not actually do it. Josephus adds, "for purposing to do this, but not actually doing it, he was not deserving punishment."* The supreme Governor of the universe, was the administrator of the event in this case. Antiochus did not die a violent death, inflicted by human agency, but by an awful distemper inflicted by the hand of God. And with his dying breath, he confessed that this calamity was sent upon him, because of the miseries he had inflicted on the Jews, and their God he had contemned.

"Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart."

The sin of Nebuchadnezzar, was, doubtless, one of haughty thoughts and lofty imaginings, offensive to that Holy Being, before whom, the most seemly object

* Τὸ γάρ μηκέτι ποιῆσαι τὸ ἔργον βουλευσάμενον, οὐκ ἦν τιμωρίας ἄξιον. Lib. xii. cap. ix.

is the humble spirit,—the penitent heart. And the extent of the sin, must be measured by the infliction of displeasure it incurred. It was a sin not so much of words as of thoughts,—a soul inflated with pride, presenting its bloated form to the glance of the Eternal eye. "He walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? And while the word was yet in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying to king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee is it spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field." The blow was inflicted directly on the sinning and haughty thoughts;—into their region the thunderbolt of the divine anger rushes,—the pride of intellect is laid low, and reason reeling from her seat, leaves the man a fit companion for the brute creation. Who can look on this fact without feeling the truth of that axiom of the moral government of God? "A proud heart is sin."

Belshazzar's sins were bold and daring deeds; but these only the developments of thoughts, in which, he had revelled and delighted long before

their manifestations were embodied to the view of mortals. His punishment, was most signally directed to the thoughts and feelings of the heart. Conscience awoke from her slumber, and smote, and spared not. The cheek of the monarch, all crimsoned with wine, takes the paleness of death. The knell of his enjoyments rung in the ear of his conscience.

"The monarch saw and shook,
And bade no more rejoice;
All bloodless waxed his look,
And tremulous his voice.
Let the men of lore appear,
The wisest of the earth,
And expound the words of fear,
Which mar our royal mirth."

Another fact, which illustrates Jehovah's visiting the sins of thought, and the sinful emotions of the heart, with the tokens of his anger, is the case of Herod, when, in all the gorgeousness of his kingship, he becomes a mass of corruption, when the angel of the Lord was commissioned to smite him: "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And

immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Pride, haughtiness, and arrogancy, are sins, whose external manifestations, generally fall short of the realities. Their offensiveness to society, operates as a curb, and restrains their rampancy. These are among the sins on which God has denounced and executed his severest anathemas: "I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

And, in addition to the above facts, are there none of those inward correctings of evil thoughts, which make a man exclaim, "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Are there no scorpion-whips, put into the hand of conscience, under whose stripes the soul winces and writhes? Are there even now, no gnawings of the worm, that enfeeble the nerves, shrink the muscles, and wan the bloom of the cheek? Are there no comings back of thoughts, once loved and cherished, now by the light of reflection, all ghastly, grim, and horrible, and from which flight or retreat is sought in vain? Do not these, as with a thousand tongues, tell that there is a tribunal, at which

thoughts are arraigned, judged, and sentenced? Do not these warn against so trifling with thoughts, as to incur those pangs which baffle all language to express? A spark of eternal torment,—an epitome of hell burning up the spirit. "When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." After thoughts have been called into being, they, like spectres, haunt the very mind which produced them; and that mind discovers its utter impotency to unmake these things of its own creation. This sentiment is often felt by the mind while reflecting with penitence on its inmost workings, and it is expressed by a poet of the seventeenth century:

> "One while I think, and then I am in pain
> To think how to unthink that thought again."

SECTION XII.

It is not easy to define *the limits of this responsibility*. It may, however, with safety be stated, that it commences, as soon as an individual possesses a consciousness of his own competence to fulfil any engagement, involving the principles of moral obligation, and, that it continues, so long as that

consciousness exists. It has a bearing on all those companions, books, associations, habits, and other causes, which, separately or combinedly, are known to produce pure and dignified thoughts, or sinful and debasing thoughts, and to expel others of a different character.

It extends to the exercise of *the will*, in all its power over the machinery of thought. There are subjects on which some *will think*, despite the wrongness and the wretchedness of such thinking; there are others on which they *will not think*, though great facilities and powerful inducements are presented. This is no new thing. Moses witnessed it and lamented, saying, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they *would consider* their latter end." And a greater than Moses wept over the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and their chosen misery,—*chosen*, because "they *would not* consider the things which belonged to their peace." God, from his throne in heaven, observes and records this *unwillingness* to think appropriately and beneficially: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Mind, is the one talent, which every sane man

possesses; and he that *will not* regulate and employ it to the best advantage, acquires the character and receives the condemnation of "the slothful servant." The responsibility of man for his thoughts tells, on the immortality of his being. There may be other, and more imposing descriptions of Hell and of Heaven; but none, more comprehensive and true than this, "He that is filthy, remains filthy still;" no worse Hell can be dreaded; "and he that is holy, remains holy still;" no brighter Heaven can be desired.

The relative extent of this responsibility, is beyond all measure. It increases with the widening sphere of influence, and augments with the lapse of time. Sound, reverberates through immensity. Thought, acts and reacts through eternity. Thoughts, uttered centuries past, are still telling on the minds of men in the present day. Thoughts, the offspring of the undying mind, inherit an endless duration as their rightful patrimony. And long,—long after, the worm has feasted on the tongue that uttered, or on the hand that recorded the thoughts,—shall the thoughts possess an immortality, in the exercise of which, shall they re-unite with their parent mind in the enjoyment of bliss, or in the endurance of woe without end.

Young men, permit one, who knows your temptations, snares, and dangers,—one who longs for your present and eternal happiness,—one who would not deprive you of any *real* pleasure, or increase any of your imaginary or real sorrows,—one, who has laboured, and will continue to labour, for your eternal salvation,—permit such a one to implore you,—to urge you, to ponder this momentous subject. Think, that your eternal destinies are, in a measure, bound up with attention to it *now*, and the destinies of those who are, or who may come, within the sphere of your influence, are equally involved. Begin *now*, to take heed to your thoughts,—accustom yourself to look at them in the light of God's holy word,—pray that God the Spirit, according to the form so often used, "would cleanse the thoughts of your heart by his own inspiration,"—and strive to acquire the habit of examining and watching your thoughts, that you may obtain a correct and impartial knowledge of your own mental territory, and its varied inhabitants. You may meet with difficulties in the attempt; but be assured that these will diminish, if not entirely dissolve, under the influence of a well-regulated perseverance. In the exercise of this vigilance, you will obtain a glorious mastery over your thoughts. You

will tame these wild creatures of the mind. You will use the rein and the curb, not to diminish their strength and vigour, but to guide and control. You will rule your own spirit, and wear a brighter honour "than he that taketh a city." You will possess an undecaying nobleness of character,—a stability of principle,—and a prowess to resist and vanquish your bitterest foes. Carry your thoughts to the cross of Christ, to be washed in his blood,—to be embued with his spirit,—to be invested with his righteousness, and to be trained for his service, in a better world. "Think, therefore, and you shall be saved. But think with all the strength of your understanding, and all the ardour of your heart. Think, with that strength of understanding you exerted, when you schemed for the profits, pleasures, or honours of this despicable world. Think, with that ardour of heart, which animated your pursuit of vanity and vexation; and God, while you are now thinking for him and heaven, will ask no more."

PART II.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

GENERAL REMARKS.— GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS DEFINED— REASONS FOR THE ADOPTION AND PRACTICE OF THIS GOVERNMENT—THE MEANS TO SECURE THIS GOVERNMENT; SELF-EXAMINATION—PRE-OCCUPATION OF THE THOUGHTS—REGARD TO THE PASSIONS—DECISIVE PERSEVERANCE—CONSTANT RECOGNITION OF OMNISCIENCE—FERVENT PRAYER FOR THE AID OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SECTION I.

"THE government of the *thoughts!*" the reader may exclaim,—"surely the government of the winds,—the control of the ocean,—the arrest of the sunbeams, are as rational subjects for consideration, as the government of the thoughts, and all alike, mere objects of imagination, never to be accomplished. Thought is as free as air, and as unchained as ocean's wave. Restraint is impracticable. As soon attempt to build a city on the bosom of the deep, as establish a government over the thoughts. The empire of thought is unique in its kind, and suffers no created

potentate to enter." It is not to be wondered, that any person, who has not given previous and close attention to the subject, should give utterance to sentiments like those he is imagined to have expressed. It may be, that the subject comes before him entirely new;—he has been thinking, it may be for many years, and delighted and benefited some, and injured others, honoured or dishonoured God by his thinkings, and yet the thought never occurred to him, that there was *a government* in his thoughts, whose rule he acknowledged, and whose authority he obeyed. Thoughts are ruled by the character of the mind. Mind is an autocrat. Yet, there is One, who says, "by me kings reign, and princes decree justice." And there are, those who are rebellious and disobedient to the authority of the Great One, and in them the Prince of this world rules. The one is a rule of equity and happiness,—the other a rule of tyranny and woe. It is not surprising, that the rule of tyranny should be so extensive in its sway,—so numerous in its subjects, and so fascinating in its pageants; —two reasons may account for this state of affairs, —one is, that the principle of this government, is in perfect harmony with the depraved passions, and tastes of human nature,—and the second is, that it is

the peculiarity of this government to blind the eyes of the understanding,* to paralize the conscience, and to harden the heart. This government is a usurpation, and the subjects are at enmity with the rightful Lord. The usurper will employ all the resources he has at command, to preserve his power undiminished, to keep his phalanx unbroken. The enlightenment of the understanding, of any of his subjects, is dreaded by the usurper as the sure omen of revolt. Each subject is a distinct kingdom in this vast empire. All consolidated in one. From its own nature,—the mode of its exertion,—the consequences of its sway, and the final boon it confers, this rule of tyranny, is appropriately called "the kingdom of darkness,"— all darkness, and no light about it, except it be the light of eternal burnings.

The rule of equity, must necessarily be antagonist to that of tyranny, since its very nature, the character of its administration,—the agency it employs,— the effects of its reign in time, and its ultimate development in eternity, unite to proclaim it "the kingdom of light." It is like its monarch, who is all light, and

* "My Lord Understanding's house," says John Bunyan, "was too light for the Prince of Darkness, and he therefore built a high wall to darken all the windows."

"in him there is no darkness at all,"—the light of intelligence, the light of purity, and the light of joy. To enlighten the understanding,—to restore the sensitiveness of the heart and conscience,—to impart pure and holy principles,—and throw around the spirit of man a bright halo of enduring gladness, are the objects, which only this government can effect. Beyond the limits of its sway these benefits are unknown. But wherever these are, the mind confesses and deplores its former infatuation, revolt, and enthralment,—acknowledges the high and holy influence to which it is subjected, and cheerfully avows its fealty and allegiance to him, whose prerogative alone, it is, to rule and govern the immortal soul. Such a change effected in the mind, all the affections and thoughts are necessarily brought into subjection to the ruling and ascendant authority.

To induce examination, — reflection, — fervent prayer, and decisive resolution, which, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, may terminate in *the submission of the mind* to the will of God, is the chief object proposed, and constitutes the most effective means and legitimate pledge for the right and happy government of the thoughts. If the chief governor of a province possess skill and fidelity,—promptness

and decision, in attention to his instructions,—the whole community will be well governed, and every appearance of rebellion and revolt will be banished. And the Mind, being brought under the control of the Spirit of God, becomes the skilful and faithful executive of the divine government in the soul.

This subject may be viewed in another and somewhat different aspect. One presented by the resemblance, which mind and thought bear to the material world. Thought is a creation: and so was chaos. But there was a vast difference between the chaotic mass, and the formation of that mass into order and beauty. Chaos was rude material. The all-ruling Spirit, separated, modelled and fashioned that material into those forms of loveliness, which God approved and angels admired. And every part of the finished and perfected creation, had laws appointed to it, which laws continue and maintain the order and harmony of the whole inanimate world. And these parts, may be again subdivided into others, furnishing evidences of the material creation, yielding to the skill and control of man, for his service and enjoyment. The sterile, or weedy soil, has been made to bring forth abundant supplies of useful produce, — the wilderness has been turned to a

garden;—the winds and waves have been made subservient to the intercourse and commerce of nations,—and the beasts of the field have been trained for the service of man, and to be obedient to his will. Reasons, which resolve themselves in utility and expedience, have induced the trial, and constant establishment of this government over the unintelligent and irresponsible parts of creation; but reasons more powerful, may be adduced for the trial and confirmation of the government of the thoughts. But these reasons will be noticed.

SECTION II.

By the government of the thoughts, is meant, not that tyranny, which precludes the indulgence and expression of thoughts, whenever opposed to prescribed forms and dogmas, which have been esteemed venerable for their antiquity; but have no higher authority than that of poor erring man; nor does this government consist in the restraint, which forbids the mind to have access to those sources of literary amusement and instruction, which may happen to be under the prohibition of a sectarian decree, or a superstitious edict. Nor is it to check

the luxuriance of the mental soil, nor to diminish its productive power,—not to bring over it the aridness of the desert, or the sameness of the sandy plain,—but *to cultivate* its richness and *restrict* the variety of its produce to the beauteous, the good, and the useful. It is to bring the mind to have in itself, an epitome of the prophetic scene, when the fir-tree and the box, the pine and the myrtle, shall flourish, instead of the thorn and the briar. The government contemplated and proposed, is that *economy*, which maintains mental vigour and originality, and prevents the expenditure of strength on wicked or vain musings.

It is *the power*, the mind exerts, in directing and keeping the thoughts to any given subject, and in excluding others, of an irrelevant and distracting tendency.

It is *the habit* of testing the moral character of the thoughts, by the unerring standard of truth, for the direct purpose of expelling wicked thoughts and encouraging good ones.

It is the *sleepless vigilance*, that maintains order and regularity among the thoughts, and holds them in readiness for any occasion, when their marshalled and united strength may be required.

It is *an alliance* formed with the Spirit of God, to rule, guide, cleanse, and influence the heart.

This is the government proposed. And it is presumed, that ample and available provisions are made for its exercise, and that it must commend itself to the judgment and conscience of every thinking creature, as being in perfect consonance with individual liberty,—with the responsibility of every man in the sight of God, and conducive to the happiness of the immortal mind. And, if this government be attained and practised by any persons in *early life*, it is not difficult to see that it will be the means of securing the most elevated enjoyment,—at least, a happy tranquillity and freedom from those distressingly corroding thoughts, to which the poet refers, when he says,

> "Lie still, lie still, ye busy thoughts,
> That wring with grief my aching heart."

SECTION III.

The *reasons*, which urge to the practice of this government, may be now more particularly considered.

Among these may be noticed, *the moral aspect of*

the thoughts by nature,—their rebellious and evil tendency. Every description of the human thoughts, in the divine word, is sustained and confirmed, by individual experience and observation. Here each man's image is drawn,—his inner man portrayed. "The thoughts of his heart" (the indigenous productions of the unrenewed mind) "are only evil continually." They are the active correspondents, and too often the vigorous allies of foes without. Enemies within the fortress, are more subtle and dangerous than those without, because among other reasons they are least suspected,—like the Trojans, who put on the Grecian accoutrements and uniform, it is no easy task to determine how to treat them,—they have Grecian appearance, but Trojan voice. There is, indeed, no tempter so wicked and debased, but he may calculate with certainty on finding *some* of the thoughts to favour his evil purposes, and to acquiesce in his proposals. As no man becomes very wicked all at once, so temptation may not gain at all times a unanimous concurrence of the thoughts; but the very parley that ensues on the temptation being presented, is an evidence, that there are some, perhaps *many*, favourable to its completion; and the temporary delay is often occasioned by attempts to

bring over the more excellent dissentients, or to carry the tempter's purpose in spite of every opposition. This being the character of the thoughts of the depraved heart, it furnishes a powerful reason why they should be brought under an enlightened and wholesome government, that their roamings, their plottings, and their rebellions may be prevented.

Another, and apparently opposite reason for the government of the thoughts, may be derived from *their original dignity*. In Eden's purity and bliss, man's enjoyment arose not so much from the beauty that met his eye, or from the melody that fell on his ear, as from the inward communings of his mind with nature and with God. His power to think, gave him his high pre-eminence over all animal creation, and constituted him the appropriate shrine and subject of the divine law. His power to think, showed him to be a being "but a little lower than the angels," and *the* creature, with whom God condescends to commune. Had some of the thoughts of man, in the days of his pristine glory,—previous to the fall,—been handed down to the present time, they would furnish some specimens of the moral and intellectual man, as he came from his Creator's hands, or as he conversed with his God. Such

thoughts would present a most fearful contrast to the ordinary thoughts of the most enlightened and sanctified mind, and furnish us with the pattern, according to which the Spirit of God designs to restore the divine image on the heart of the sanctified. Every consideration arising from the immortality and the capacities of the soul, should urge to the exercise of a most vigorous government of the thoughts, since the thoughts are powerful in their influence on present character, and the eternal destiny of the soul.

On this subject an old writer says, "Let the consideration of the noble and dignified nature of our Thoughts, induce us to an orderly management of them: for they are beams of that Light which is inaccessible, the immediate fruits and eldest Sons of that immortal Parent in us, which is nearly allied to the Divinity itself, and how then can we possibly be so insensible of our own high character, who were framed after the Image of the Immortal God, and are designed to be made more ample partakers of his Nature, as to lay out our time and our pains so busily as we do, in the management of a Family, acquiring an estate, and supporting and adorning a mouldering Carcase, and yet totally disregard the

menage of our thoughts, which are the pride and glory of our Nature. For wherein else, but in this thinking, reasoning Power, do we differ from the inhabitants of our stable or our kennel? And as this in general discriminates our Nature from theirs, so I had almost said, does one Man as much differ from, and excel another, by how much he is the better Master of his thoughts, and can lay them out to more generous purposes; if, therefore, we have any just sense of the dignity of humane Nature, and would advance and improve that part of us, which is properly the Man, we must manage those thoughts by which we manage all things else." It is unbecoming the dignity of man, to be "crowned with glory and honour,—to have dominion over all things," and *not to be able to rule himself.*

The facilities afforded make this government *attainable:* "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." The mirror of sacred truth shows each man the character and complexion of his thoughts,—teaches him the necessity of having the heart renewed, that the fountain being purified, the streams may be clear,—furnishes him with valuable maxims for the regulation of his thoughts,—gives valuable

promises of heavenly aid,—directs to the throne of grace, and encourages him in the expectation of the constant influence of the Holy Spirit. Next to the sacred volume and its rich provisions, are those invaluable memoirs which show the workings of the human heart, and record the triumphs of those who, amidst great difficulties, have subdued the volatility and perverseness of their thoughts, and have for years exercised a complete government of their minds. This last means, may teach the young recruit how the foe has been foiled and defeated, give some hints as to the best manner of using the sword of the Spirit, and other parts of the Christian armour.

The last reason for urging to the practice of the government of the thoughts, is, *God has enjoined it.* "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The way in which this, and similar injunctions were understood by holy and *inspired* men, may be gathered from their writings. David had such pungent sorrow from the seductive influence of his thoughts, that he earnestly prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Humble were his confessions, and fervent were his prayers in reference to his thoughts; thus showing that he watched and guarded

them with untiring vigilance. Isaiah so frequently speaks to Israel of the thoughts in their devotion to God, or in their wanderings from him, that it is evident, that he regarded the government of the thoughts as that which God had required. Paul, the apostle, has left on record so much of his own personal experience, as shows, that he lived in the daily exercise of this control over the thoughts. The greater part of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is a description of the conflict carried on by the apostle on the arena of mind with the thoughts of his own heart. If mind be a talent, its improvement is beyond all calculation important,—and its improvement is best secured by a healthful and vigorous discipline being adopted in *early life*. Such discipline is the fulfilment of the command, in its application to the talent of mind, "Occupy till I come," and is the very government of the thoughts proposed. Irrespective of any present and apparent benefits, derivable from the exercise, the authority of the divine injunction, should be of sufficient weight, to influence and decide any intelligent being in the course he should pursue. Although in reference to the question under consideration, the benefits of governing the thoughts, are obviously incalculable to the individual

who practises it, and to all who come within the sphere of his influence, yet the divine requirement will be supremely influential in deciding the sincere and enlightened enquirer after truth. The means by which this government of the thoughts may be exercised, will be considered in the following section.

SECTION IV.

The first means, to secure the government of the thoughts, is, the regular practice of *self-examination*. Self-acquaintance must precede self-government,—and self-acquaintance can be obtained, only by a close and frequent examination of the inner man,—the thoughts, the affections, and the prevailing bias of the mind. To this exercise, there is too often a culpable indifference, if not a sinful opposition, displayed. "We strive as hard to hide our hearts from ourselves as from others, and always with more success." The mind that can look into the intricacies of philosophy,—the depths of science,—the characters of men,—and the intrigues of statesmen, can also be contented to remain ignorant of its own narrow territory. This examination is enforced by divine authority: "Examine yourselves" is not

merely a special duty to be performed on special occasions, but one that should receive attention, at least, daily. "Know thyself," the ancients said, was an oracle from heaven; and it is not improbable, that it was indirectly derived from the records of inspired truth. Pythagoras taught his disciples to attend to this exercise every night before they retired to rest, and most strenuously urged them, thrice to examine all the transactions and all the omissions of the past day.* This practice, adopted with an honest and persevering fidelity, will soon become an established habit. And nothing so calculated to bring the

* "Nor let soft slumber close your eyes
Before you 've recollected thrice
The train of actions through the day:
Where have my feet chose out the way?
What have I learn'd, where'er I 've been,
From all I 've heard, from all I 've seen?
What know I more, that 's worth the knowing?
What have I done, that 's worth the doing?
What have I sought, that I should shun?
What duty have I left undone,
Or into what new follies run?
These self-enquiries are the road
That leads to virtue and to God."

"I should be glad, among a nation of Christians, to find young men heartily engaged in the practice of what this heathen writer teaches."
—*Dr. Isaac Watts.*

thoughts under a happy control, as to have them scrutinized by the light of revealed truth.

On this subject, an old writer, with his usual quaintness and force, says, "It will be our wisdom, for the better management of our Thoughts, now and then to review them, to call them together to the Muster, and examine the state and plight of our Minds, to encourage good Motions and discountenance Bad, and to let them know we have set a spie upon them, and that they come not there without our Observation. And because, every Man has his blind Side, and the Sin of his Bosom, and consequently our Thoughts run further into some sort of Objects than others, we must take particular care, and, after such review, shall be better enabled to guard there most, where our Thoughts ply the most, where these haunts are, and the company they most delight in, as he who commands in chief, in a Siege, will place the strongest guard there, where the Walls, or other Fortifications of the Town, are the weakest. So that, if you find that lust, for instance, has stolen in at the Windows of your eyes, and got the greatest ascendant over you, watch your Thoughts, on that Side, for there they 'l be sure to hanker: So again, if you observe yourself the weakest on the side of

provocations, and Anger be your infirmity, take care to have your Reason within call, and take off your Thoughts betimes from resentments, and meditating revenge, for that 's the subject they 'l be sure most of all to dwell on. And thus, by reviewing our Thoughts, we shall both acquire power, and learn how to manage them, and be able to countermine the Devil, who, knowing our strong, and feeble part, better many times than we do ourselves, always lays his train there where 'tis most likely to take fire and to blow up our hearts, the strong fort of our innocence." But it is of the utmost importance, that *some time* should be fixed and set apart for this examination of the thoughts, and then, most punctually observed. Let that time be so sacred, that it shall be felt by conscience, to be a sin worse than sacrilege, to have it employed for any other purpose. Each person must determine whether he can devote one hour in every day to this exercise. A heathen did it, a man in a Christian country, ought to do more than a heathen. One day in seven, should be hallowed by a special application of some of its time to communing with the heart. Guard against concealment and deception, look closely and judge impartially. Rely not on your own sagacity, but pray, as the

Psalmist did, " Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Another means, which may be suggested as conducive to the end desired, is, *That the thoughts should be pre-occupied with those subjects most calculated to improve the intellect and benefit the heart.* To explain, or rather to account for many of the phenomena in natural philosophy, it was, at one time, deemed quite sufficient to say, " Nature abhors a vacuum." This nostrum of the Schools was as unsound in its philosophy, as it was untrue in its application to the difficulties, which it was supposed to solve. But however inapplicable it was to matter, and however untrue as a solution of apparent mysteries, it is *true,*—it is applicable as exhibiting a principle common to the human mind. An indolent mind, is Satan's plaything,—to fill it with the most sinful and debasing suggestions, and then mock at the misery produced. A mind unoccupied, is an impersonation of wretchedness. The miseries of *ennui* are usually found to be insupportable. Some object, or objects of contemplation, attention, or affection will be found almost essential to the preservation of

sanity. Many minds waste much precious time and strength, in trying to think what they shall think about, and how employ their thoughts. The necessity for some object to engage the attention of the heart and mind, is beautifully and forcibly expressed by one of the most eloquent preachers of the day. He says, "The heart will not consent to be desolated. Though the room which is in it may change one inmate for another, it cannot be left void, without the pain of intolerable suffering. It could not bear to be left in a state of waste and cheerless insipidity. It would revolt against its own emptiness. Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have a something to lay hold of — and which, if wrested away, without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, but it cannot be desolated of all. A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration." The thoughts

and affections of the mind, like the roots of the ivy, feel after something to which they may cling, and if every thing to which they have been accustomed to cling, be removed, and no substitute be supplied, they wither and die, to the injury of the whole plant. As there is this going forth of the thoughts and affections, in search of some *thing* on which, or about which, they may employ themselves,—this utter abhorrence of vacuity; and as all this is well known to the evil one,—the enemy of man,—it is of the utmost importance that the mind should plentifully sow its own territory with the incorruptible seed of truth, and thus prevent the enemy, who would sow his tares.

Books in solitude, and companions in the social circle, are often the sub-agents of the evil-sower: some books scatter seed as worthless in kind, and as abundant in quantity, as the thistle-down.—It falls as gently, roots as quickly, and produces as copiously. And it is well, if it produces nothing worse. Some thoughts are like the fabled dragon's teeth, and the crop as much to be dreaded. The flippant infidel companion, buoyant in youth, and daring in enterprize,—the obscene poet, and the Godless novelist, are the seedsmen of such pernicious

grain. The beauty of language, and the charm of softly-flowing numbers, form the thin skin which barely hides the plague-spot it contains. Against such *things*, a vigilance too rigid or too constant cannot be exercised. "While the good man slept, the enemy sowed tares." And times of drowsy indolence are ever favourable to his malign purpose.

Books and companions should be selected, with a direct view to the cultivation of the intellect and the improvement of the heart. And these two objects may be combined without detriment to either, and both rendered subservient to the most elevated and ennobling enjoyment of the youthful mind. There are books which please, without poisoning the mind, and instruct, without injuring the heart.* The studies of history† and science would much enlarge

* Among the works to which reference is made, may be especially noticed, those of Milton, Cowper, Akenside, Montgomery, Kirke White, Barton, Pollock, and many others.

† The cheapness of works of a useful tendency, affords a facility to young men to cultivate their minds and extend their information, unknown to any previous generation. Among these may be noticed, the works published by the Society for "Promoting Useful Knowledge," and by that for "Promoting Entertaining Knowledge." And the same facility is afforded for obtaining Religious Publications, through the means of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,"—"The Religious Tract Society," and other similar Institutions.

the range of knowledge, and invigorate the intellectual faculties. And for the improvement of the moral and spiritual man, the perusal of the biography of the wise and good, and the daily study of the sacred Scriptures, will be found highly beneficial. It was judicious advice once given, "Never be without some book of a decidedly religious character, which you can read to fill up the intervals of leisure, which may occur during the day." Such a practice, cannot fail to have a most salutary result, in the production and maintenance of suitable thoughts. Men distinguished in the world of literature for the eminence and honour they have acquired, were accustomed to prepare their minds for those splendid efforts they made, by conversing with the mighty dead,—by bringing their minds to clasp hands with the giant minds of gone-by days.

When Bossuet was about to write one of those orations, which secured an immortality to his fame, he used first to read Homer, as he said, "that he might kindle his lamp by the rays of the sun." And is there not a Sun, whose light is clearer, whose kindlings are more certain, and more accessible than Homer? The thinkings of an angel and the conversation of a seraph, would well repay the closest

attention. But the God of angels and seraphs, has condescended to record his thoughts and present them to man in a form accessible to all. God's thoughts are kindling and inspiring. "How precious are *thy thoughts* unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" Communion with these thoughts will exert a powerful influence in expelling the dark forebodings, or gloomy suggestions of the mind, and in awakening thoughts of a purifying and cheering tendency. The whole word of God, if pondered and understood, will be the inexhaustible source, whence the mind may derive thoughts that approximate to heaven in intelligence and sanctity. Among those portions, which might be specially chosen for the occupation of the mind, are the enraptured themes of Isaiah,—the devout feelings of the Psalmist,—the comprehensive maxims of the Proverbs,—the simple histories of the Evangelists,—and the sublime visions of the Revelation. These are the fountains of truth unmixed with any error, without any of the turbidness of human corruption. And in these days, when such vigorous and untiring efforts are made to mingle the turbid streams of patristic theology with "the river of God;" too much care cannot be taken to guard against these troubled

waters. The best security against erroneous thoughts and imposition on the subject of apostolic authority, is a correct and enlarged acquaintance with the only sources of apostolic verity,—"the Epistles," which contain apostolic doctrine,—and "the Acts," which show apostolic practice. A mind, richly stored with scriptural truths, and making those truths the subjects of frequent meditation, will not be an easy prey to evil thoughts,—nor an easy victim to the seductions of error. Good Bishop Horne, with much propriety and beauty, observes, "The mind should be well furnished with proper materials on which to employ itself. We shall then be secured against the incursions of rambling, conceited, worldly, impure, and revengeful thoughts, which otherwise will devour half our time, and appear against us, to our unspeakable amazement, in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed."

To prevent that vacuity the mind abhors, and that indolence most favourable to Satan's devices, the mind may, in connexion with inspired truth, derive much material for thinking, from a habit of reading "Nature's ample page." The changing seasons,—the expanse of Heaven, all glowing with light and beauty,—the measureless ocean,—the extensive

landscape,—vegetation, in all its varieties of kind and progress,—will present many interesting lessons, and suggest many valuable thoughts to the man, whose *soul* looks out of his eyes, to see and consider the wonders of God's creating and superintending attributes. David meditated on the works of God's creative power and goodness, and viewed the position which man occupied in the midst of those works, and gathered thence exalted thoughts of the excellence and glory of God. And on another occasion, when meditating on the providence of God, which he did, by enumerating the most remarkable facts, in which the history of the church was involved, he is instructed by the unerring Spirit to record, "Whoso is wise and will *observe* these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." Some men see, but do not perceive. The appeal may be made to the outward sense, but the correspondent emotion is not awakened. The tympanum vibrates, the retina refracts, the evidences of animal vitality are not wanting; and the spiritual part of the man is not dead, but sleepeth,—an indescribable torpor pervades all the perceptive faculties, and he looks on the broad type of Nature's book, and says, "I cannot read, because I am not learned." And

when he hears another tell, how glowing thoughts and vivid emotions were awakened, by nature's loveliness or nature's song,—he then manifests some feeling, and that only of amazement, that any creature of his own size and figure, should ever give utterance to those sentiments, which an admiration of nature and devotion to God had inspired. In delightful contrast to this, is the man whose soul is *all soul*,—whose perceptive powers are in constant activity, and who, by the habit of conversing with nature, quickly recognizes her gentlest whispers, and perceives her every changing tint.

"Not a breeze
Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes
The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain
From all the tenants of the warbling shade
Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake
Fresh pleasure, unreproved. Nor thence partakes
Fresh pleasure only: for the attentive mind,
By this harmonious action on her powers,
Becomes herself harmonious: wont so oft
In outward things to meditate the charm
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home
To find a kindred order, to exert
Within herself this elegance of love,
This fair inspired delight; her temper'd powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.
* * * * * *

* * * Thus the men
Whom nature's works can charm, with God himself
Hold converse; grown familiar, day by day,
With his conceptions, act upon his plan;
And form to his, the relish of their souls.

A full sympathy with these sentiments, would secure to the mind ample material for thought, and no ordinary means for moral improvement. The ultimate object of the Spirit's work on the heart—in regeneration and sanctification—is to conform the mind, in its principles, feelings, and tastes, to the mind of God. And as a means to an important end, the primary object of the Spirit, is to call away the thoughts from sinful and vain pursuits, and to engage them on those subjects which attract the heart to God: The love of God in Christ—the freeness of pardon—full salvation through Christ—the enjoyments of religion—the anticipation of glory. These are subjects sufficiently copious to employ, and sufficiently spiritual to improve, an angel's mind, and warm an angel's heart. And it may be, that much of angelic happiness is derived from the contemplation of these subjects, and the connexion these subjects have with enlarged manifestations of the glory of God. "Into these things the angels desire to look." It would be a high promotion to become fellow-students with

them. The apostolic advice is comprehensive and forcible, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* of these things."

A vigilant and restrictive guard over the passions, is a necessary means for the right government of the thoughts. Though the thoughts are usually anterior to the affections or passions, in the order of time (if the measurement of time may be applied to the movements of mind), yet subsequently, it will be found, that the passions assume the supremacy in the soul, and rule the thoughts. The object of our love, or of our hatred, must first have been the subject of our thoughts, whether for a shorter or a longer time. Feeling, under which general term any passion may be noticed, and all the passions included, too often becomes the rampant empress of the mind. The rule of passion, is at all times, one of turbulence and infatuation. Thoughts follow, where passion leads. The time of youth and early manhood, is the time when reason and passion "break a lance or two," to determine the right of

ascendency; and too often passion is allowed to bear away the palm, and leave reason, not dead, but asleep, in an unbroken skin on the field. How many a youth, whose prospects were bright, whose talents good, and whose promises of success and honour, in the field of science and literature, were once fair, has allowed some ruling passion to divert his attention, to distract his thoughts, and to suspend his studies, so that when the time has arrived, when mental vigour, attainments, and qualifications for his profession are to be put to the test, a well-earned ignominy has darkened that brow, on which honour's wreath might have shone, had not passion's Syren voice been heard and obeyed. The future prospects of the man, are all dependent on his entering the profession, to which he has been devoted. By some means, better concealed than known, he creeps into the profession; but he is so imperfectly informed, that his incompetence soon becomes generally known, and he spends an ignoble existence—an object whom the wise pity, and the ignorant reproach.

It is, therefore, a part of practical wisdom, in mental government, to accustom the understanding and the judgment to inspect and determine the intrinsic merit or demerit of any candidate for the

suffrages of the heart. First decisions, may be erroneous, and the results final. Love, has sometimes been won over to an object, whose intrinsic worth could furnish no claim to the intelligent and enlightened regard of the human heart. The extraneous circumstances,—the mere tinsel about the character, fascinated, allured and infatuated; while, on the other hand, hatred (modified sometimes by the name of prejudice), has been as suddenly produced and as pertinaciously retained, and that towards an object, whose excellencies justly merit high admiration and ardent love. In each case, *a passion* is ascendant, leading the thoughts captive,—often rallying them to one point, and making her sceptre to rule in every region of the mind. To enlist, please, and employ every faculty of the mind, is the perpetual exercise of this empress of the soul, and all for the augmentation of her own power. She provides mementos for the memory,—pictures for the imagination,—anodynes for the conscience,—reins for the will, and stimulants for the thoughts. Under such an influence, the *man* is lost in the slave of this inmost tyranny. Were this dominancy of the passions over the mind, confined to terrene objects only, it would deserve the attention, and call for

decisive measures, on the part of every human being, to maintain the righteous prerogative of reason,—*enlightened reason*, to keep the passions within the precincts of his own government. But where this dominancy of the passions, interferes with the high and holy claims of God, on the best and warmest love of the human heart, no vigilance can be too constant,—no resistance can be too determined,—no efforts can be too vigorous, to keep these seraphs of the soul, as "ministering spirits," waiting at the altar of God, delighting in obedience to his will, and, as "flames of fire," obeying reason's high behest, at one time to consume the sacrifice of devotion, to burn the incense of praise to God, and, at another time, to warm with benevolence, or glow with affection, in the circle of human friendship.

The absence of any given affection, does not always imply the existence of the opposite. In reference to any ordinary object, the absence of love does not imply the existence of hatred. But where the supreme affection of the heart, is justly claimed for an object of unequalled and surpassing excellence, and for one whose claims are supported by an endless series of favours, bearing on the happiness, in time and in eternity,—favours, which nothing short

of *the love of God* could devise, and *the power of God* could bestow,—favours conferred on creatures, who deserve nothing but anathemas and deaths;—for a heart to be without love to the supreme Benefactor, whose heart had poured forth its richest demonstrations of love to the creature man, and the sinner condemned;—for *the human heart* to be without love to *such a being*, and in *such circumstances*, indicates not only the *absence* of love, but the existence of a hatred, for which no other reason can be assigned, than that which the Spirit of God has given,—"that the carnal mind is enmity against God." That enmity is not a simple passion, but a combination of all in a malignant and hostile attitude against God and his government. While this influence is predominant, it is no wonder, that the thoughts are reluctant to rally for the service of God; or, that being rallied, they should be restless to converge on some other object more congenial with the ruling passion of the heart. With this sentiment, the confession of the wise man agrees, when he said, "*I* was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly." Even where this enmity has received its death-blow, and is already virtually *slain*, yet, there are some strugglings,—

some convulsive throbs, which are much more decisive symptoms of approaching and speedy death, than symptoms of returning life; but even these, do not uselessly appeal to the sympathy of the thoughts. The heart, that is now the possessor of *love to God*, as the ruling passion of the soul, has often to lament, that simultaneously with the abdication of enmity, there was not an entire extinction of all the influence it exerted on the thoughts, and of all the habits it formed in the mind. Thoughts, long accustomed to respond to the call to rebellion and hostility, will show themselves ill at ease when called to acts of devotion and love. The young Christian, has frequent cause to lament the roaming thought and the vagrant imagination, because the effects of his natural enmity are not quite eradicated, and the thoughts are pupils of a new master, with whose mode of instruction and discipline they are not yet familiar. When *love to God* becomes the ruling and established passion of the soul, the thoughts will, from the whole circumference of their roaming, come in every direction to this passion, as the great magnetic centre of attraction. "Where the treasure is, there the heart will be also." Some of the dispensations of Providence, seem to be regulated entirely on this

maxim. God will have our thoughts and hearts in heaven,—and he takes the most precious of our earthly treasures to himself: our thoughts,—our hearts follow. It is, then, comparatively easy work to "set the affections on things above, and not on things of the earth." Strong and absorbing attachments, and strong and absorbing aversions, are sure to interfere with the governance of the thoughts. Other passions, there are, which exert an influence as powerful as love or hatred, and which require that a constant and rigorous discipline should be exercised, lest they lead the thoughts captive. And since enmity against God, is the inherent passion of our fallen nature, the mind cannot be too powerfully impressed with its unreasonableness and injurious consequences, as well as its sinfulness, and with the necessity of rousing every energy, and of using every appointed means for its entire eradication. That man is born with such a nature, is admitted, is his misfortune; but that he should retain and cherish it, in the face of so many inducements and facilities for its destruction, is his fault.

Properly to exercise this guard over the passions, it is necessary to prevent the sparks which kindle, and the fuel that feeds these flames. Though the

soul is immaterial and spiritual in its nature, yet it is so closely wedded to the body, that they powerfully act on each other. And it is well known that there are bodily appetites and habits, which may be indulged to the prejudice of the health of the soul. Intemperance, excites and inflames the passions. Indulgence and indolence, produce obesity of body,—feebleness of intellect, and excitement of the passions. Exercises, regular and manly,* associated with abstemiousness, are to be observed by those, who would not be the slaves of passion's fickle reign. Sacred scripture exhorts to "mortify the deeds of the flesh." The apostle Paul exemplifies the meaning and force of the exhortation, when he says, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection:† lest that by any means, when I have

* It would be useless to repeat here all that has been said in favour of gymnastics; the principal design being the development of all the corporal faculties with which nature has endowed us; no one can deny its immediate influence on the physical, as well as moral state of man."—*Treatise on Gymnastic Exercises.*

† "Certamen est, quo saepius adierimus, fortiores erimus."—*Seneca.*

preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

An old writer, with great propriety, observes, that "the *flames* of lust *quench the spirit,* as the scorching beams of the sun put out the gentler heat of the fire. Foul weather in the lower region, sends up nought but filthy streams and vapours." Turbulent passion will ever prevent the order and purity of the thoughts.

If exercise and abstemiousness be necessary for young men, in order to keep their passions in subjection, and that as a means of governing their thoughts, it is not less necessary that they should take heed to their company. Retirement, occasionally, is useful; but entire solitude, never. Social intercourse is a boon of Providence claiming our gratitude. That man has but half a soul, or he must have miserably perverted its noble faculties, who has no liking for the society of his fellow-men. Yet it must not be concealed, that a love of company has induced the unthinking youth to give his precious time indiscriminately to every loiterer, who has invited his society. Nor has time been the only loss the unthinking and unsuspecting youth has sustained,—he has lost that comparative innocency, which, like the bloom, gave beauty to the untouched fruit,—he has

lost the calm, the envied calm,—activity without turmoil,—the spring-morn of the soul. These are losses not to be repaired. Costly gems and sums of wealth, would some men give, if they could but obliterate from the page of their history and the tablet of their memory, the conversation which first awakened the impure association, or kindled the flame of inordinate passion. The least departure from chastity of sentiment, in conversation, may produce a train of thought most ruinous to peace of mind and purity of principle. The young man, who would guard against the prostration of his intellect, his moral and his immortal being, before the shrine of passion—unhallowed and defiled passion—must shun the companion who throws out the unchaste hint,—the obscene allusion,—the impure or profane inuendo, as he would shun the deadliest monster of the jungle.

The mental exercises required in preventing, or opposing these causes of provoking the passions, must have a salutary influence in governing the thoughts, and the very bridling of the fiery steeds of the passions, must give energy to the whole mind in carrying out all the noble purposes of self-government. Any temptation loses more than half its strength, when the intended victim is on his guard.

"In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird." These exercises cannot fail to augment self-knowledge, make the heart acquainted with its easily besetting sin, show it its weakest gate, and induce it to place the most vigilant and courageous sentinel, where the greatest danger is to be apprehended.

The next means recommended is,

Decisive perseverance, in establishing and maintaining this government of the thoughts.

It must be admitted, that the man must be master over his thoughts, or his thoughts will gain the mastery over him. True courage is proved by antagonism. Where there is no opposition, courage is not required;—energies are enervated by inaction. The struggle and the conflict, invigorate every power. The palæstra, and not the couch, is the nurse of mental greatness. Easy conquests, acquire small glory. There are sham fights on the arena of mind,—petty skirmishes, in which both parties are agreed, before the battle, which is to conquer. Bad thoughts, are no airy combatants, nor can a victory over them be obtained on easy terms. Resistance, delayed or relaxed, weakens energy, on the one side, and imparts vigour to the other. Decision and perseverance, are antagonists before whom the stoutest

enemies must crouch, and ultimately fall. But, if decision quail, and perseverance withdraw, they put the chaplet of victory within the opponent's reach. The question to be determined here, is not, what is the measure of mental strength an individual has at command, but, does he use it decidedly for the accomplishment of the desired object? An infant's strength, decidedly and perseveringly employed, may accomplish more than a giant's arm, fitfully and hesitatingly exerted. Continuous application, accumulates force, and achieves wonders. "A continual dropping, wears away the stones." The element, proverbial for its weakness,—in its smallest divisible quantity, constantly applied,—perforates one of the hardest substances. This, the achievement of a small, but concentrated power. And the man of very moderate mental strength, may, by decided and continued application, accomplish much more than the man of genius, with his infrequent and fitful efforts. The very nature of the antagonist, requires the exercise of this decisive perseverance. The subtilty, the rapidity, and the lubricous nature of thought, enhance the difficulty of exercising over it a decisive control. That very accumulation of difficulty, is an additional reason for an uncompromising decision. Remit attention, and the difficulty becomes more formidable. Persevere, and the conflict is less difficult,—the conquest more certain,—and the prize nearer attainment. And the prize of victory over the thoughts, is far more valuable, and more lasting in its results, than that in the Olympic games.

The sentiments on intellectual training, advanced by the celebrated Dr. Thomas Brown, of Edinburgh, are equally applicable to the moral improvement of the thoughts under consideration. He says, "What should we have thought of the competitor of the Olympic course, whose object was the glory of the prize, if, with that illustrious reward before him—with strength and agility that might ensure him the possession of it—and with all the assembled multitudes of Greece to witness his triumph, he had turned away from the contest, and from victory, because he was not to tread on softness, and to be refreshed with fragrance, as he moved along! In that knowledge which awaits your studies, in the various sciences to which your attention may be turned, you have a much nobler prize before you; and, therefore, I shall not hesitate to call forth, occasionally, all the vigour of your attention, at the

risk of a little temporary fatigue, as often as it shall appear to me, that, by exciting you to more than ordinary intellectual activity, I can facilitate your acquisition of a reward, which the listless exertions of the indolent never can obtain, and which is as truly the prize of strenuous effort as the palms of the circus or the course." This language is not too strong, if the object to be obtained, by a decisive perseverance in bringing the thoughts under a wholesome government, be that of giving to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual man, a superiority over all delusive influences,—an excellence that shall survive the wreck of the universe, it is indeed a prize that will amply repay the utmost ardour, the most fixed attention, and the most prolonged exertion. To overcome that volatility and slipperiness of the thoughts, so inimical to decision, it will be found beneficial to acquire the habit *to commit the thoughts to paper;* and after making frequent attempts, thus to hold and detain them, and look them in the face,—attention will acquire strength,—resolution will be confirmed, and decision, animated by victory, will go on to future and greater triumphs. While, on the other hand, a desultory habit has cherished and strengthened indecision. And indecision, has

blighted many a fair hope, and withered many a beauteous bud of promise.

Epictetus taught his disciples the necessity of decision, when he said, "When you remit your attention, do not fancy you can recover it when you please; but remember, that by the fault of to-day, you will be in a worse state to-morrow, and a habit of not attending is induced. Why should you not preserve a constant attention? there is no concern of life in which attention is not required."

"Aspirat primo fortuna labori."

The same sentiments are more forcibly expressed by a modern and living writer of distinguished eminence. He says, speaking of the necessity of controlling the thoughts, "This is not the attitude of nature, but it may be tried and practised, and, at length, effectually learned. But you will never reach it, unless you begin; you will never succeed in it, unless *you persevere*. And, therefore, my plain advice to you, is, that you now set to it in good earnest. Lay a mandate on your thinking faculty, and send it heavenward to God. There is many a useless moment that may thus be turned to account —many an idle waste in our existence, that may

thus be reclaimed to sacredness. This is true spiritual education—the practice of godliness, instead of the theory—the way of going about it—and by which the soul may, at length, be disciplined to the habit of setting God always before it." * Young men, have courage to make the attempt to restrain and suppress evil thoughts *now*,—maintain an unyielding fortitude,—a decided perseverance in the conflict; and do this, by engaging the strength of the Omnipotent Spirit on your side, and by putting yourselves under his unerring guidance.

The next means, which may be submitted, and which will harmonize with those already recommended for the right government of the thoughts, is, *a constant recognition of the omniscience of God.* It is much to be regretted, that there are errors of principle and errors of degree, entertained on this important subject. No error is isolated. Every erroneous view has its innumerable associates of thoughts, feelings, and principles, all bearing the mark, that they are not related to truth. The great and general truth of God's omniscience, is admitted; but it is such an admission, as has all the effect upon the mind, as might be expected from the most determined

* Dr. Chalmers.

denial. It presents the anomalous combination of a theoretical belief, and a practical infidelity. The awful reality of an ever-present and all-observing Deity, is not felt and recognized. Men can act and react scenes in the region of thought, and under the all-searching eye of God, which the boldest transgressor would blush to enact before any of his fellow-creatures. A man of violent passions, has restrained his temper and ruled his tongue, when in the presence of the friend, whose good opinion he valued, while the same man has indulged in a long series of malignant thoughts and malicious intentions, in the sight of God. The influence of a creature's presence has been owned and honoured, while the inspection of God, has been disregarded and despised. The belief of God's omniscience, as a part of orthodox theology, has been received, while, as a practical truth, it has been rejected. Men have felt and acted as though the eye of God looked on all things and on all events, but not on the human mind,—as if the heart of man was an exception,—as if its recesses were too deep for his glance, too intricate for his wisdom to search;—as though certain portions of sacred writ, declaring the omniscience of God, had never been read; or, if read, they were destitute

of that evidence of inspiration, which is to be found in every other portion of the Bible. When men are in affliction, they believe and confide in the omniscience of God, and seek his interposition: but when sinful thoughts and designs are agreeable, then they say, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?"* Jehovah answers them, and says, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?"† "I the Lord search the heart, and try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to his doings."‡ "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."§ "Hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?"‖ Complete knowledge of our own hearts, or of the hearts of others, is unattainable by our most elaborate researches. "But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."¶

Young men, these are the sayings of that book, by which you are to be judged, and by whose

* Psal. lxxiii. 11. † Psal. xciv. 9, 10. ‡ Jer. xvii. 10.
§ 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. ‖ Prov. xv. 11. ¶ Heb. iv. 13.

principles your final destiny will be awarded. Would you dwell where the special presence of God, and access to his fulness of glory, constitute the sources of unending joy,—bring your minds and hearts *now*, under the discipline of constantly recognizing the fact, that God's eye is as keenly fixed on your heart, as if it were the only object in the universe, on which his searching glance was engaged. All the great events in providence—all the mighty changes in the world, are brought to pass in harmony with this important fact, "that the hearts of men are in the hands of the Lord." And hence it is, in the government of the world of mind, as well as in the government of the material world,

> "He ceaseless works alone: and yet alone
> Seems not to work."

The writer admits, that you have many discouragements, from the hypocritical character,—the baneful influence of many, from whom you justly expected a better example. You see men walk in masquerade with men, and under the most sanctimonious pretensions, and artificial courtesy of manners, often conceal the basest principles and most malignant designs. But with God there is no

shuffling. *He* looks through appearances, and sees realities.

"On human hearts he bends a jealous eye."

And his hand records your thoughts, words and deeds, to manifest them to assembled worlds in the day of the revelation of the "righteous judgment of God." Dare *to be honest* to yourself in the sight of God. Remember there is no garb his eye cannot penetrate,—there is no hypocrisy he cannot detect,—and there is no particle of sincerity, however small, but he will notice, approve, and cherish. If in only one heart "there is found *some good thing* toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam," it does not escape his notice, and the token of his approbation. Be it your concern to lay your open heart before the mirror of divine truth, and look at it there. Try it, and examine it by these unerring oracles. Maintain the habitual impression, "THOU GOD SEEST ME";—my most secret thoughts and feelings. And while this habit may prevent the vagrant, sinful thought, from being indulged, it will impart great encouragement amidst conscious weakness, and the feeblest germs of piety in your own hearts. To believe the truth, and

realize the fact of God's omniscience, will contribute to your comfort when you *desire*, but *cannot pray* for spiritual blessings,—when you *oppose*, but cannot conquer sin; then will it be a solace to you to know, that "he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit,"—the sigh,—the inward struggle,—the unutterable groanings his own spirit has produced; "the hearer of prayer" correctly interprets, perfectly understands, and promptly relieves. And amidst temptation's severest conflicts, your thoughts, trained to recognize omniscience, may delight themselves in the assurance, that God sees them,—marshals them for the fight,—imbues them with prowess,—endows them with strength,—and crowns them with victory. Nothing has a greater tendency to destroy hypocrisy, and encourage sincerity than the habitual recognition of omniscience.

Thou art, O God! the life and light
Of all this wond'rous world I see;
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from thee;
Where'er we turn, thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are thine.

Strive to feel this truth, as a fact constantly presented to your observation. And in the presence,

and under the immediate notice of God, you will take heed that your thoughts behave themselves, in some measure worthy of the heavenly Spectator.

And there is a means, for the government of the thoughts, which may powerfully assist all others, and without which, none can prove effective; and that is, *Fervent prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit.* If the streams are to be purified, the fountain must be cleansed; and if the fountain is to be cleansed, the agent that can reach it, and possesses power commensurate to the undertaking, must be implored and employed. The thoughts are the streams,—the fountain is the heart, and the Spirit of God is the great purifier; *He* alone is competent to the undertaking. It is his prerogative to heal the troubled waters of the heart. *His* to reach the veriest sub-springs of the soul. He *alone,* can change the whole moral nature. He *can* turn the bitter, foul, turbid fountain into sweetness, purity, and crystal brightness. He *can* put that pure and potent principle in the heart, which shall give a new character and a new disposition to the thoughts, while it exhibits its own heavenly origin, "as a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is the very agent that man *needs* in every moral enterprise.

What is so *reasonable,* as that the Spirit of order and rightness, should undertake to regulate and rule the confused, distracted, and distracting thoughts of the heart? And what so condescending, as that he should voluntarily engage to use his influence for our aid? yea, even to proffer the most appropriate assistance? The condition on which this mighty agent engages to bestow his help, is, that such help should be *sought.* "He shall lead you into *all* truth." This is the comprehensive promise. An appeal is made to the instinctive affections of our nature, to encourage us to seek this great and holy helper. "If any of you have a son, and he ask of you bread, will you give him a stone? If he ask of you a fish, will you for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he ask of you an egg, will you for an egg offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Prayer in such circumstances, with promises so full, and with the blessings needed so amply spread out to view, is but the acknowledgment of necessity,—the stretching out the hand to the Donor of all good for the promised boon. A soul thus in prayer, is weakness forming an alliance with

omnipotence to wage, or maintain war against moral evil. It is in prayer the rebel hosts of the heart admit a holy and heavenly ruler. It is the ceding of the inner kingdom to the government of wisdom, purity, and love. It is the soul's acquiescence with God's request, "My son, give me thine heart." It is the prodigal clinging to his father's neck.

The very habit of prayer, has a salutary influence on the thoughts; but especially when that habit is directed to seeking the constant influences of the Holy Spirit. It has a tendency to keep alive that holy vigilance and care against those thoughts, which might grieve that Holy One, or in the least degree quench the spiritual ardour which it is his office to kindle. A soul wishing to be a temple filled with the Holy Ghost, will guard every avenue against the introduction of anything that "is unholy, or that defileth, or that maketh a lie." It will induce the fervent cry, "Cleanse thou the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit." The expurgation of the idol guests of the heart must be anterior to the high enjoyment which the possession of the rich graces of the Holy Spirit can impart. When the purifying process is commenced, *He* works within "both to will and do of his own good pleasure."

The soldier is not censurable because he *has a foe* to encounter; but because he allows that foe to gain the advantage through neglect of means, which are amply provided and adapted to secure the victory. Enemies to the spiritual interests of men are very numerous, and no man is allowed to remain for a long time without having some painful proofs of their malignity and power; but the means of resistance and conquest are ample and available,—the sword of the Spirit, and the strength and wisdom of the Spirit. A heart anxiously seeking the influence of the Spirit, cannot be far from being "right with God." Thoughts will soon be restrained from their roaming and vagrancy, and be brought to delight themselves in the Lord, where this anxiety is maintained.

Young men, let the writer entreat you to implore the aid of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, cleanse, and sanctify your hearts: this will be the beginning of peace and joy to your minds. Cultivate the habit of prayer for the divine influence; you will thus converse with heaven,—walk with God while on earth, and prepare for the intercourse of heaven. "Since but to wish more virtue is *to gain*." If ancient and heathen men admitted that nothing could be good

or great without the divine afflatus, and sought it on every occasion, requiring skill or courage,—surely, your age, your temptations, your better enlightenment, your necessities, your moral relations, and your privileges should urge you *now*, without delay, to seek with importunity the promised influences of the Spirit, that you may live not to yourselves, but to the glory of God.

PART III.

THE INFLUENCE OF THOUGHT IN THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF THE QUESTION:—MOTION AND INFLUENCE TRACEABLE TO MIND.—ANY GIVEN KIND OF THINKING INDULGED PRODUCES CORRESPONDING PRINCIPLES—DEVELOPES AND STRENGTHENS HABITS.—PRINCIPLES AND HABITS CONSTITUTE CHARACTER, PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND MORAL.—INFLUENCE OF THOUGHTS ON DREAMING.—THE RELATIVE VIEW OF THE QUESTION:—THE INFLUENCE OF THOUGHT ON THE MIND AND CHARACTER OF OTHERS.—THOUGHTS OUTLIVE THE EARTHLY HISTORY OF THE MAN.—ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE.—PRODUCE AN EFFECT ON THE ETERNAL DESTINIES OF MEN.—CONCLUDING APPEAL.

SECTION I.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." This is the verdict of unerring truth,—this the solution of an important question,—this the index of human character, in all its variety. This, is an eternal verity of the moral government of God. God looks on the thinkings of the heart, and his estimate of character is formed—his sentence is determined. Character *is*, what it is in the sight of God.

Character *is not*, what it often appears in the sight of men. Character is made up of the intellectual and moral habits of the man; and these habits are necessarily under the influence of the thoughts. Thought is the sculptor of character. Any given number of men, present a verisimilitude in the great principles of character, and it will be found, that their thoughts on those principles generally harmonize. Another number of men shall be selected, entirely different in character from the former, and it will be invariably found, that upon all the several points, in which the character differs, on those very points their thoughts disagree. And so will it be found in reference to those slighter shades of difference of character, the dissimilarity will be found in exact ratio to the difference of thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." All aversion or attachment proceeds on the assumption that the character is not a mere accident,—not a mere external appendage; but a necessary result, an inseparable effect of an equivalent cause,—an external development of long-continued and long-cherished thoughts of the heart. These are no airy beings, that come and "flit away, and leave no trace behind." Thoughts are either like Harpies, which

steal part and filthify the rest of the soul, or like Cæsar's coiners, leave their master's image and superscription upon the mind. The influence of the thoughts is indelible. An influence possessing the power of reproducing its own impressions in an incalculable series,—a power which leaves the discoveries of the photographic art at an immeasurable distance. It is the fact, and not the *modus agendi* which is now under consideration. The fact is known, the mode of acting is unknown. The fact is realized in every hour's experience of the reflecting and observing mind; but to account for this fact, and to give an analysis of its processes, would be impracticable. Some guesses,—some conjectures may be indulged and avowed, but anything approaching to an undoubted accuracy, or an undeviating certainty, as relating to the process of influence, cannot be presumed. Yet the fact of the thoughts influencing the character, is so often and so forcibly presented on the sacred page, as to place it beyond all doubt. When God is about to carry out, towards any depraved man, his own purpose, "Let us make this man in our own likeness, let us form him after our own image;" he begins by putting the thoughts in order. And thus God did at the first creation.

When he put the machinery of thought into motion, himself and his own fair and beauteous world, were the objects about which the thoughts of his intelligent creature man were to be employed. God's communion maintained the innocence and holiness of man,—kept his thoughts centred on the divine nature and benevolence, and, until diverted from this object, he sinned not. In the work of creating the soul anew, God the Spirit begins with the thoughts. He engages the attention of the thoughts on objects remotely different from those on which they have been employed,—he allures them on in their thinkings, until they joyfully rally round the "new things, and old things pass away."

SECTION II.

The whole universe is one grand illustration of influence. Every part or portion is acted on, and is acting in an incalculable series of movements. While this is true, in reference to the whole material world, and the fact is presented to our notice, in some form or other every day, yet it is a fact for which we seldom think of accounting,—seldom think of tracing out the cause. Inertness is an essential property of

matter; it yields only to an *ab extra* impulse. That impulse is given by some cause, which has within itself the power to move. This power is an essential property of *mind*. And hence, all the movements of man are those which his will has determined, however diversified the motives, and rapid the process, may have been, by which the will has arrived at the decision. "God, being an infinite Spirit, and coming into immediate contact with all parts of the universe, he is capable, by a mere act of will, of effecting all possible changes in the same manner, but in an infinitely higher degree, as we are capable, by an act of our will, of causing certain motions in the muscular parts of our body, and thus producing changes in the external objects around us.

"We shall find it impossible to give any account of innumerable changes which are continually taking place in the visible world, without tracing them up to mind. There cannot be a clearer proof of a Deity, than the existence of motion." This evidently appears not to be essential to matter. "Not being, therefore, an original state of matter, but merely an incident, it must be an effect. But since matter, not being intelligent, cannot be the cause of its own motion—and yet we cannot conceive of any atom

beginning to move without a cause—that cause must be found out of itself. Whatever may be the nearest cause, or the number of secondary causes, though immeasurable portions of matter may be reciprocally or successively moved; though the series of links in the chain through which motion is propagated, may be indefinitely multiplied; we must, in order to arrive at the origin of these various phenomena, ascend to mind, and terminate our enquiries in spirit; nor can we account for the beginning, much less for the continuance and extension of motion, unless we trace it to the will of that Being, who is the cause of all causes—the great original mover in the universe. Power is therefore the attribute of mind; instrumentality that of body."* This view of motion and influences, is very analogous to that motion which, once began, continues in a long series of influences in the region of mind. "But, if it is the will of the Author of Nature, that in the physical and inanimate system nothing should be made in vain—that nothing should perish and be as though it had never been; how highly improbable must we feel it to be—how inconsistent with the general character of his great arrangements, that anything

* Rev. R. Hall, A.M.

should fade and perish in the sentient and moral system, that, for the sake of which all others were organized, and to which, with all their exquisite harmony and beauty, they only serve the purpose of a scaffolding to a temple. If no seed—no particle—no ray—no exhalation can lose its way and escape into nothing; how much less can we believe that past thoughts and impressions—the germs of truth, and the primary causes that modify a character which is to last for ever, can ever undergo a total and final annihilation. Such an event would create a chasm in the history of the mind itself, and the admission would almost shake our belief in its immortality." But as the Divine mind made the material orbs to obey his fiat, and to move in their appointed spheres, so the human mind, cherishing any given train of thought, has put forth an impetus which will for ever and for ever continue to thrill and vibrate. In this view

"Man's soul is his own universe, wherein
* * * * * *
* * * * * *
Thoughts are his creatures, which run to and fro,
And bring him pleasures from all parts and things—
The light or shade of ecstacy or woe,
The wide creation of imaginings:
Things past, things present, and things yet to be,
Mirror of history and futurity."

SECTION III.

Thoughts are like seed cast into the ground; some may be crushed by the foot of the careless passenger, —some may be carried away by the birds of the air, —some may perish under the influence of a baneful atmosphere, and others, cherished in the bosom of earth, may take root, spring up, and mature, and contribute, in a measure, to turn the desert into a fruitful field. And thoughts, which thus germinate like seed, produce after their own kind. To strip this subject of all figurative language, bad thoughts *may pass through* the mind, as swiftly as on the wings of light, and leave scarcely their tint or tinge behind; but these thoughts *may* be detained, nurtured, and strengthened till they become constituent parts of the mental being. Good thoughts *may*, with equal rapidity, pass through the mind, like a summer's breeze, which scarcely moves the smallest leaf, and no trace of them is left; but they *may* linger in the soul, become constant residents, and impart their own character to the dwelling they occupy. This will be found, in most cases, to be the history of principles, whether those principles be good or bad. A principle, full-grown, seldom enters

the mind. The good and holy thought is the acorn or sapling put into the mind, and it eventually becomes the firm and sturdy principle, spreading out its branches, like the banana, diffusing itself until the whole region of mind is adorned with beauty. See the man, "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night;" he contents not himself with giving expression to his hallowed enjoyment, "How precious are *thy thoughts* unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" His mind he richly stores with truths, which he adopts as the principles of his faith and practice. He examines every sentiment that invites his credence, and carefully submits it to the unerring standard of truth, that so the character of its claims to his confidence may be determined, and be received or rejected, according to its harmony or discrepancy with the standard. He thus acquires Berean nobleness of character, and shows himself, not the plaything of every new teacher, not the easy dupe of every quack in mind and morals, but an investigator of opinions by the light *of truth*. In every question of morals and religion, he "searches the Scriptures to see whether the things he hears are so or not." These thinkings and investigatings

are acts of mind, which, being often repeated, issue in the formation of high and important principles.

The same process is observable in the production of any given principles. In some minds, the process may be exceedingly slow,* and, in others, more rapid; yet, in all, thinking takes the precedence of principle, as the cause precedes the effect,—and as the cause imparts its own impression to the effect, so the thinking gives its own moral likeness to the principles it produces. These views will be found applicable alike to the history of wicked, as to holy principles. For though the maturity in vice may be more rapid than the maturity of holiness, yet this is to be accounted for, on the ground of man's original bias to that which is evil, carrying his thoughts with the rapidity and force of a torrent in one direction. As that torrent is restrained or unrestrained, will be the character of the principles brought forth. These incorporate themselves with the mental and moral being of the man. Like those studies to which Cicero refers, these principles of good, sustain youth, delight age, adorn prosperity, afford a solace and a retreat in adversity; they delight at home, do not hinder in business, watch with us at night, journey

* "Nemo turpissime repente."

with us when we journey, and wander with us in the country.* As this sentence is intended to show the *constant and inseparable influence of the studies,* in which the mind has been engaged, so the influence of thoughts and principles are inseparable from the man. "As the man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Nor is it surprising that such results should be produced, when a review is taken of the almost incalculable number and variety of agencies, which are administering to the thoughts. The inimitable English essayist,—the writer, whose works ought to be in the hands of every young man,—the judicious and pious John Foster of Bristol, when addressing a young person, and urging a review of the agencies and actings on the mind, says, in his own emphatic style, "Here a person of your age might pause, and look back with great interest on the world of circumstances through which life has been drawn. Consider what thousands of situations, appearances, incidents, persons, you have been present with, each in its time. The review would carry you over something like a chaos, with all the moral, and all other

* "Haec studia, adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur." —*Cic. Pro Archia Poeta.*

elements, confounded together; and you may reflect till you begin almost to wonder how an individual retains the same essence through all the diversities, vicissitudes, and counteractions of influence, that operate on it during its progress through the confusion. While the essential being might, however, defy the universe to extinguish, absorb, or transmute it, you will find, it has come out with dispositions and habits which will show where it has been, and what it has undergone. You may descry on it the marks and colours of many of the things by which it has, in passing, been touched or arrested.

"Consider the number of meetings with acquaintances, friends, or strangers; the number of conversations you have held or heard; the number of exhibitions of good or evil, virtue or vice; the number of occasions on which you have been disgusted or pleased, moved to admiration or to abhorrence; the number of times that you have contemplated the town, the rural cottage, or verdant fields; the number of volumes you have read; the times that you have looked over the present state of the world, or gone, by means of history, into past ages; the number of comparisons of yourself with other persons, alive or dead, and comparisons of them with one

another; the number of solitary musings, of solemn contemplations of night, of the successive subjects of thought, and of animated sentiments that have been kindled and extinguished. Add all the hours and causes of sorrow which you have known. Through this lengthened, and, if the number could be told, stupendous multiplicity of things, you have advanced, while all their heterogeneous myriads have darted influences upon you, each one of them having some definable tendency. A traveller round the globe would not meet a greater variety of seasons, prospects, and winds, than you might have recorded of the circumstances capable of affecting your character during your journey of life. You could not wish to have drawn to yourself the agency of a vaster diversity of causes; you could not wish, on the supposition that you had gained advantage from all these, to wear the spoils of a greater number of regions. The formation of the character from so many materials reminds one of that mighty appropriating attraction, which, on the fanciful hypothesis that the resurrection should re-assemble the same particles which composed the body before, must draw them from dust, and trees, and animals, from ocean, and winds."

A series of influences so long and continuous, cannot fail to produce visible and lasting results.

SECTION IV.

Principles may be embraced and avowed, and as easily put off and laid aside, as anything else the man has been accustomed to put on and put off; but principles produced *in* the mind, by the process of close and continued thinking, and strengthened by a variety of collateral influences, will prove like ivy, whose roots have struck into the cement of the castle, and shown itself in the very inner halls,—to attempt to root it out, you must endanger, if not destroy, the whole structure. In the case supposed, the songsters of the grove might supply the place of the hired minstrel; and the halls that were wont to resound with the martial air or wanton song, might echo the melody of innocence and love. This would be a change in the character of the place, not less remarkable than that seen in a mind, where new principles have sprung up and grown. The mind, possessing new principles, soon acquires new habits. It is frequently called by the voice of principle to decisive and vigorous doings, in which a less

repugnance and a greater inclination is felt in the last, than was felt in any former doing of the kind. This change of feeling has all the force of a new power,—a new motive. And thus, the acquisition of habit, becomes more and more easy, and at length becomes established and confirmed. Habits furnish an index to the character of the thoughts, as fruit furnishes an index to the character of the tree. Fruit falls off when it is ripe, habits remain, and constitute the ornament, or disfigurement of the mind that gave them being. The man of desultory, confused, and obscene thinkings, will have no habits of perseverance, punctuality, and chastity. Habits originating in thought, and petted by thoughts, are not much unlike the spots of the leopard, and the blackness of the Ethiopean's skin, to change either, is an admitted impossibility,—yet both can be effected by Omnipotence. Since habits are almost changeless, and changeless monsters tyrannizing the mind that called them and fashioned them into existence, the most strenuous exertions are required to suppress or banish that kind of thinking, which will issue in the formation of evil habits. To prevent the cockatrice brood, the first discovered egg must be crushed.

SECTION V.

Moral sentiments and feelings are included in the view given of principles; and these, together with the habits of the man, make up his character. Man has a physical, an intellectual, and a moral character,—the first arising out of his relation to the material world, the second out of his relation to the world of mind, and the third out of his relation to the moral government of God. In all three, thought has its office, and thought has its influence. In reference to the *first*, it may be observed, that as the less is ruled by the greater, and matter is inferior to mind, it is no wonder, that *the material man* should receive his fashion from the mind within. The thoughts, in all their busy diligence, chisel out the expression of a man's countenance, and leave their own likeness upon it. It may be, that it was in reference to this influence of the thoughts of the wicked on their physical character, that the Spirit of God taught his prophet to leave it on record, "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them." Observation confirms this statement. Most men have their sins written on their countenance so plainly, that "he who runs may read." The whole

nation *can* read this document, without the aid of an "Educational Bill;" and every eye *does read* it, and every mind understands it, except his who never looks on it, but in the mirror. An old proverb, "A good face is the best introductory letter," took its origin from the principle under consideration. Not the tint of the complexion, nor the symmetry of the features, is meant; but the impress,—the expression, which the thoughts have given. The countenance is the index the mind has written of itself.

Nor does *the effect of hallowed thinkings* make a less powerful appeal to the senses. There are not a few men, who, free from the cant of party and the demureness of hypocrisy, cannot be seen without the observer receiving the impression; these are men of God,—"Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." The moral atmosphere, in which such men move, inspires all with whom they associate with veneration and delight. And though we are not to expect, that the face is to shine, as did Moses' when he came down from the mount of God, yet there are visible indications of abstraction from earth, and of heavenly communings, which, like lingering rays from the eternal throne, leave a brightness on the countenance which no earth-born joys can impart.

There is an influence which the thinkings of the mind exert on the health of the individual. Solomon said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Alluding, doubtlessly, to the healthy tendency of thoughts and feelings, so well regulated as to produce an abiding and well-sustained cheerfulness. There is a thinking in which some young men indulge, which cannot fail to produce debility and premature age;—a thinking which acts directly on the animal spirits, saps the constitution, and reduces the stamina of the most vigorous frame. Whatever contracts guilt, produces either obduracy or depression. A burdened conscience is the most fatal disease. Other diseases, are alleviated by solacing and cheering thoughts; but this brings on a wounded spirit, which none can bear. The pain is insupportable, from the conviction, that the wounds are self-inflicted. These wounds, *only* Christ can heal. Thoughts were the basilisk brood, which inflicted these wounds. But the intellectual and moral training of the thoughts, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, exert the most salutary influence in averting, to a great degree, some of the miseries usually attendant on old age. As it is not every kind of wine, so it is not every mind that becomes sour by the

lapse of time. Age may have some infirmities; "but, after all," as Cicero* observes, "this imbecility of body is more frequently occasioned by the want of discipline in youth, than by the natural and necessary consequences of long life. A debauched and intemperate young man will undoubtedly, if he live, transmit weakness and infirmities to his latter days." These statements Cicero abundantly confirms, by adducing facts from the page of history, and known illustrious individuals of his own times. Among those illustrations is the case of Sophocles, whose melodious tones of voice, whose muscular strength and vigorous genius were unimpaired, long, long after fourscore years had passed over him. Another writer,† making reference to his extraordinary poetic genius, says, "Sophocles had almost attained his hundredth year when he composed this tragedy;‡ in which the marks of decayed genius are so far from appearing, that it was deemed by the ancients an unrivalled master-piece of dramatic poetry." Moses lived to the age of one hundred and twenty years, and though, at little more than half that age, many may be found bowed down with infirmities, yet "his eye was not dim, nor the force of his

* De Senectute. † Valerius Max. cap. viii. sect. 12.
‡ Œdipus Col.

strength abated." He was a man, whose thoughts were with God, and the influence was seen in sustaining his physical vigour.

The influence of the thoughts in the formation of the *intellectual* character of man, is almost too obvious to need a single remark. The young man whose literary advantages may have been small, may, by reading authors most eminent for correct views and original thoughts, and diligently thinking over their sentiments and opinions, and devoting regularly a portion of time out of every twenty-four hours to this exercise, make rapid progress in knowledge,—acquire mental vigour, and attain an intellectual superiority, which shall leave his more advantaged, though less thinking companion, at an immense distance. The character of the former becomes distinguished by intellectual eminence; the character of the latter, by mental feebleness. The former is every day adding to his stores of knowledge and associates in mind; the latter tendeth to poverty and loneliness. The latter, if roused on any occasion, or by any motive, *to make an effort* of mind, may succeed in his attempt to shine (for weak minds aim more at brilliance than worth), but it will be with a *lunar brightness,* very transient,—

with borrowed rays,—best seen in the dark; but the former will grow in *wisdom,* as well as increase in knowledge, and rise with *solar glory,* blessing as well as shining,—enriching others, as well as delighting himself in the beauties he beholds, permanent, and anticipating no change, but that of attaining to meridian splendour. Each man, in his youth, may choose for himself, and accomplish the object of his choice, by adopting *that thinking,* on the result of which, he may calculate with as much certainty, as the astronomer can calculate the next transit of Venus. He may choose for himself, mental greatness, and he will attain it; or he may choose that the world shall witness in him a mature age, combined with mental puerility, and he will doubtless attain it. Let him begin to regulate his thoughts in reference to this object, and whatever may be his other sufferings, he will be spared at least from disappointment on this subject. He will economize his time, he will prefer one kind of feeling to another, he will select his companions from the ancients and the moderns, all with a view to the attainment of the object of his choice; as he will calculate on the influence of these in the formation of the character he is ambitious to acquire. So thought

Seneca when he said, "What happiness, and how beauteous an old age awaits him, who has betaken himself to the communion of those great minds,—who has constantly with him those with whom he may deliberate on every thing which concerns him, whom he may consult daily as to his own moral progress, and hear truth from them without contumely, praise without adulation,—to whose very similitude, by this intercourse, he may learn at last to form his own feebler nature. We are often in the habit of complaining that our parents, and all the circumstances of our birth, are not of our *choice*, but of our fortune. We have it in our power to be born as we please in this second birth of our genius. Of the illustrious minds that have preceded us, we have only to determine to which we wished to be allied; and we are already adopted, not in the inheritance of his mere name, but to the nobler inheritance of every thing which he possessed."* Thus said Seneca; but a greater authority than that of Seneca's has said, "That which a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The observations which have been advanced on the influence of the thoughts on the physical and

* Seneca, De Brevitate Vitae, cap. xiv. xv.

intellectual character of the man, are equally applicable to his *moral character*. At this, some may be disposed to demur. But however strange and unaccountable it may seem, it is a truth which cannot be denied, that some people, who reason very judiciously on other subjects, and readily admit reasonable reasons on other subjects, think, or seem to think, that they must treat the great subject of morals or religion very differently, and examine it by different laws to those by which they examine all other subjects. Such persons are unwilling to believe, that a great and spiritual revolution can be brought about in the character in the same way as any other change would be wrought on the mind, —the specific character of the agencies, and their adaptation to the proposed end, being, in any given cases, equally granted. This admission does not in the least degree militate against the scriptural doctrine of regeneration being the work of the Spirit. It has been stated in a former part of this work,* that the Spirit begins with the thoughts and feelings of the heart, and makes them the participants of an influence which results in the forming of the character after the divine image. The existence and

* Part I. sect. x. p. 41.

adoption of spiritual thoughts, are the incorruptible seed of truth and moral excellence sown by the hand of the Spirit,—growing up under *his* fostering care, and making the once barren wilderness of the heart as the garden of the Lord. "He that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

There is no wonder that men should become monsters in iniquity, when evil thoughts are indulged and cherished. The eye of God, saw the evil thoughts in the heart of Hazael, when he instructed his servant Elisha to tell him of the monstrous character he would develope, and the monstrous deeds he would commit, at the slightest intimation of which, Hazael scornfully said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?" Such an indignant enquiry can be accounted for, only on one of two reasons, either that Hazael knew not the thoughts which were in his mind, or that, knowing them, did not believe in their influence on his future character. But his subsequent history proved his error.

It is imperative on every intelligent being, frequently to direct a scrutinizing glance within, to see what is the pattern of his future character, according to which the thoughts are working. When the apostle Paul looked within, and contrasted his present

with his former character, he said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The influence of the thoughts is exceedingly great, from the fact, that they work with *unslumbering* diligence. They neither sleep nor die. As evidence of their life and activity, they often rush upon us with thunder step, and lightning glare, and we find ourselves again in scenes, which we imagined had for ever passed into oblivion.

> "And how and why we know not, nor can trace
> Home to its cloud this lightning of the mind,
> But feel the shock renew'd—nor can efface
> The blight and black'ning which it leaves behind;
> Which out of things familiar, undesigned,
> When least we dream of such, calls up to view
> The spectres whom no exorcism can bind,
> The cold, the changed, perchance the dead, anew,
> The mourn'd, the loved, the lost, too many, yet how few!"

Nor is this influence confined to the limits of time,—to the date of man's earthly history. What is known and felt now of this influence, is but a diminutive model to give some idea of the working of the thoughts in eternity, where the soul, with its powers in full exercise, shall find its past thoughts, not only claiming and enjoying their right of immortality, but ministering to its misery or happiness,

and affording a living illustration of the truth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." These views are in perfect harmony with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, instructing his disciples on the eternal destinies of men, lays open the scenes of eternity to their view. He showed them a rich man in hell, calling for the help of the poor beggar he had despised,—at his hand he wanted *a drop of water* for himself, and a sermon for his profligate brethren on earth. Here past thoughts were the makers of his woe. And when Christ shows them the scene of judgment, he there appeals to the designs and deeds of benevolence, or of selfism, which were formed and performed from the motive of love or hatred to him, and thus he awakens a memory which had long lived in drowsiness; he touches a spring which vibrates through eternity, while it unceasingly augments happiness, or increases woe, as it rings in the ear of the undying soul the emphatic "*Son, remember.*"

Nor can it be said, *that our dreams are altogether uninfluenced by our waking thoughts.* Dreams, when they have been contrary to the moral taste and

principles of the individual, have occasioned much distress to the devoted and intelligent Christian. Dreams are not a correct criteria of the moral state, though they are sometimes the reflections, of our waking thoughts. The faculties which give the thoughts their moral character, are inactive during the process of dreaming. It seldom, very seldom happens, that the dreams of sleep are in direct opposition to the thoughts of wakefulness. A mind much in commerce with the service of Satan and sin, must not expect visions of heaven. Wicked men shrink back with indescribable horror from an eternal dream. A writer,* not more distinguished for his talent than for his infidel insinuations, on more than one occasion doubted the theory he had avowedly embraced; and on such an occasion, when thinking of the Humism,—of death being an eternal sleep, he says, "It has often crossed my mind, during moments of gloomy scepticism, the possibility that the last sleep may not be *dreamless.* Fancy *an endless dream of horror.* It is too dreadful to think of;—this thought alone would lead the veriest clod of animated clay to aspire after immortality." Even Byron shrunk from *the dream,* the *eternal dream,* his own thoughts could supply.

* Byron.

Dreams present a greater variety, and require a more extensive classification, than almost any other class of mental phenomena. To go into the metaphysical investigation of dreaming, would be a departure from the object proposed in this little work. The youthful bard,* who caught the inspiration of Heaven, and the mantle of Milton, speaks thus of dreams:—

"Some dreams were useless, moved by turbid course
Of animal disorder; not so all.
Deep moral lessons some impressed, that nought
Could afterwards deface; and oft in dreams,
The master-passion of the soul displayed
His huge deformity, concealed by day,
Warning the sleeper to beware, awake:
And oft in dreams the reprobate and vile,
Unpardonable sinner,—as he seemed
Toppling upon the perilous verge of hell,—
In dreadful apparition, saw, before
His vision, pass the shadows of the damned;
And saw the glare of hollow, cursed eyes,
Spring from the skirts of the infernal night;
And saw the souls of wicked men, new dead,
By devils hearsed into the fiery gulph;
And heard the burning of the endless flames;
And heard the weltering of the waves of wrath;
And sometimes, too, before his fancy, passed.
The worm that never dies, writhing its folds
In hideous sort, and with eternal death
Held horrid colloquy, giving the wretch
Unwelcome earnest of the woe to come."

* Pollock.

SECTION VI.

Man is a social being. As a thinking, intelligent creature, he holds intercourse with his fellow-men; and through this intercourse, he exerts a powerful influence for good or for evil. Each man creates his own moral atmosphere, and brings it to influence others as imperceptibly, but as effectually, as the atmosphere has its influence on the physical constitution. The science of mental influence is in its babyhood, when compared with the discoveries which will yet be made. *How* mind acts on mind, cannot be very satisfactorily described. No more can be known than what "the Great Teacher" has taught of the Spirit acting on the human mind: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and *whither* it goeth." Here are volition, reality, evidence, and extensive results,—and extending beyond all calculation. Such is the influence of thought on the minds of others,—such is mental influence. With this power at command, and ever active, it is not difficult to believe that "no man lives to himself." The influence of his thinking, must be felt in some direction, and for a beneficial or injurious

purpose. A thought, imported into a mind, may exert a most powerful influence over the present and the eternal condition,—and when the tongue which gave it utterance, or the hand that penned it, shall be mingled with the dust of the earth, the thought shall still be thrilling on, till it shall out-tire the burning sun and glittering stars. Thoughts begin, but never end. A thought originated, may be the beginning of an angelic band to bless you in time, and delight with you in eternity; or the first of a demon brood, to worry you in all the scenes of earth, and haunt you for ever through the regions of an unseen world. This influence acquires importance from the several relations in which man is placed. *The brother* may, because he has felt not the responsibility of his relation, or abused the confidence it has inspired, because he has engendered evil thoughts, giving an impulse to feelings never to be recalled,—because he has trifled with the scruples of conscience, and swept off the beauteous bloom of virtue and innocence, because he has benumbed the heart, and put the soul on a declivity where the rapidity of descending to perdition is enhanced by progress,—because *the brother* has done all this, he may be regarded as a worse murderer than Cain,

inasmuch as the ruin of the soul, is a greater sin than the murder of the body. But there are some brothers who indulge in a virtuous and religious thinking, and their influence is salutary. In many families, the elder brother, bringing his influence to bear on the younger branches, has been instrumentally the saviour of the family.

The companion gathers strength to his influence, in proportion to the confidence and affection which may exist. Companionship has been the medium of influence, for the salvation of the few, and for the ruin of many. Many are the snares secretly laid to entrap the youthful mind, while the vile seducer seems to be intent on the gratification of his own vanity, and perfectly indifferent to the fate of his victim. "The man who, in the pride of his fancied intellectual superiority, awakens in the mind of another one serious doubt on the subject of divine truth, or he who, in the pursuit of ungodly pleasure, allures a fellow-creature into a participation of his own profligacy, thereby opens a flood-gate which Omnipotence alone can shut; and were a prophetic eye to take a survey of the future consequences of one such action, it might see there, the commencement of a train of evils as appalling in their nature,

as they are interminable in their duration. The instant such a man has succeeded in effacing the religious impressions, or corrupting the moral principles of another, he has put a principle of evil into operation, which it is utterly beyond his power to control; he has inflicted an injury which the wealth of worlds, if it were at his command, could not repair,—and an injury, too, of which he can neither see the termination nor calculate the extent; the victim of his own artifice is prepared to perpetrate the same crimes, and to entail upon others the same ruin; and thus may the effects of his sin continue to be perpetuated and felt when he himself is forgotten, or when his memory lives only in the book of that remembrance in connexion with its consequences."* To the truth of these remarks, the experience of every day bears melancholy and decisive evidence; for who has not known them exemplified, and to a fearful extent too, even within the sphere of his own observation? The character of the man is formed by the company he keeps.

The minister of religion has, to a great extent, the formation of character under his influence. The devout, the holy, happy man, who exemplifies in his

* Dr. Gordon of Edinburgh.

life and practice, the truths he proclaims, presents a powerful influence constantly bearing on the minds of his flock, and they receive the impression, take the cast of the mould so constantly applied, and exhibit a character corresponding with the moral image of him whom they respect and revere.

> "And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies;
> He tries each art, reproves each dull delay,
> Allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way."

While, on the contrary, the time-serving, shuffling, hypocritical, inconsistent man, who bears the sacred office, and lives an unhallowed life, is "a savour of death unto death." The mischief he does, ends not in the scoffer saying, "Like people, like priest." The injury he does is incalculable. The language of Pollock, in its application to such a man, is exceedingly appropriate.

> "Most guilty, villanous, dishonest man!
> Wolf in the clothing of the gentle lamb!
> Dark traitor in the Messiah's holy camp!
> Leper in saintly garb! assassin masked
> In Virtue's robe! vile hypocrite accursed!
> I strive in vain to set his evil forth!
> The words that should sufficiently accurse
> And execrate such reprobate, had need
> Come glowing from the lips of eldest hell.
> Among the saddest in the den of woe,
> Thou saw'st him saddest, 'mong the damned now damned."

Next to the minister of religion, in the importance and extent of moral influence on the minds of others, *is the mother*. The moral character of children, is almost at a mother's option, what it shall be. Not a few, now occupying stations of respectability, usefulness, and honour, have to trace the first germ of their moral excellence to a thought or a prayer, which fell from a mother's lips, like a drop of Heaven from the finger of God, into their hearts. Or, it may be, that some inconsistency, or series of inconsistencies, observed in the parent, strengthened the natural enmity of the heart, and that heart continues far from God by wicked works.

But conjectures are vain; only the disclosures of eternity, with its miseries and its joys, can fully make known, what has been the extent of the influence of one mind in forming the character of others.

The limits the writer at first prescribed for this work, have already been exceeded. His effort shall be, that the remaining thoughts, shall be as condensed as practicable.

SECTION VII.

The effect, or the influence, of thoughts, may be imagined, but never calculated. Each benevolent

Institution, now the glory of our country, may be traced to one thought, or the thinkings of one individual. Two illustrations may suffice. The "British and Foreign Bible Society," to the thought of the Rev. Mr. Charles, of Bala;—the "Anti-Slavery Society," to the thought of Thomas Clarkson, Esq. The same principle of influence is applicable to other institutions. That eminent persons have been raised up, to fill important and extensive spheres of usefulness, may be traced to the thinkings of some individual, or to one thought. An affectionate sister expressed her solicitude for the salvation of a brother; and Persia receives the word of Christ, in its own language, from the hands of a Henry Martyn. A sermon thought at Basingstoke, Hants, was the means of extensive blessing on the coast of South America, in bringing out John Smith, the martyred missionary of Demerara. The pious conversation, the thoughts of anxiety for the salvation of a young man, expressed in the Tabernacle Yard of the Metropolis, have reverberated over the Pacific, by raising up the heroic and sainted John Williams for the South-Sea Islands. And the intrepid,—the devoted and enterprizing Moffat, caught his missionary inspiration (instrumentally) from a thought suggested by

seeing a placard announcing a missionary meeting. Dr. Philip for Africa,—Dr. Morrison for China, and others, furnish ample and forcible illustrations of the principle,—the influence of thoughts on the minds and the character of others. Many others might be added, showing

> "That a small drop of ink
> Falling, like dew upon a thought, produces
> That which makes thousands, aye, and millions think."

SECTION VIII.

In conclusion, young men, permit the writer to entreat your attention to these "Thoughts upon Thought," as to the thoughts of a friend, most sincere and ardent in his desires to see you, what you *may* be, and what you *can* be,—*the best benefactors* of your species, by seeking an intellectual and moral eminence for yourselves, and by exerting your influence, to give a new and improved moral tone to the class to which you belong. And there is one encouragement arising from the fact, that in exactly the same ratio that a young man improves his own mind and augments his mental resources, he enhances and renders more benign his own moral

influence. Another encouragement is derived from the happy results which must arise from the exertion of this influence on the character of others. All the generous feelings of an enlightened and a renewed mind, must be highly gratified in witnessing a reckless, dissipated youth, forsaking his ways of folly and his thoughts of sin, and turning to God,—to ways of wisdom and thoughts of virtue. This may, in its beginning, be as feeble as the drop that first gives a dewy wetness to the stratum; but gathering magnitude and strength in its progress, it proves itself a "well of water springing up to everlasting life." To witness such a scene in the world of mind, is not less interesting than that which is seen in the material world, when you see the stream the little child can turn with its hand, but you see it flowing and increasing until it becomes the mighty river, or the expansive sea, throwing its arms around islands, and washing the shores of continents. Remember, young men, that neutrality in mind and morals is an impossibility. You must be injuring yourself, and injuring others, or acquiring good for yourself, and doing good to others. And since the injury you are exhorted to shun, or the good you are invited to seek, associates itself with your character in time, and your

destiny in eternity,—since the decision in your own case for good or for evil, may involve the happiness or misery of thousands, who may come directly or indirectly, nearly or remotely, within the sphere of your influence,—since in the time of life at which you are now arrived is that most favourable for you to cast the die of your future character,—since the possession of health, reason, and life, is held by a most uncertain tenure,—since thoughts, words, and deeds, are irrevocable, be it your concern to have your own mind and heart set right by the Spirit of God, that while "no man lives to himself," and some live for the ruin of others, you may be ambitious to live for the benefit of all with whom you associate.

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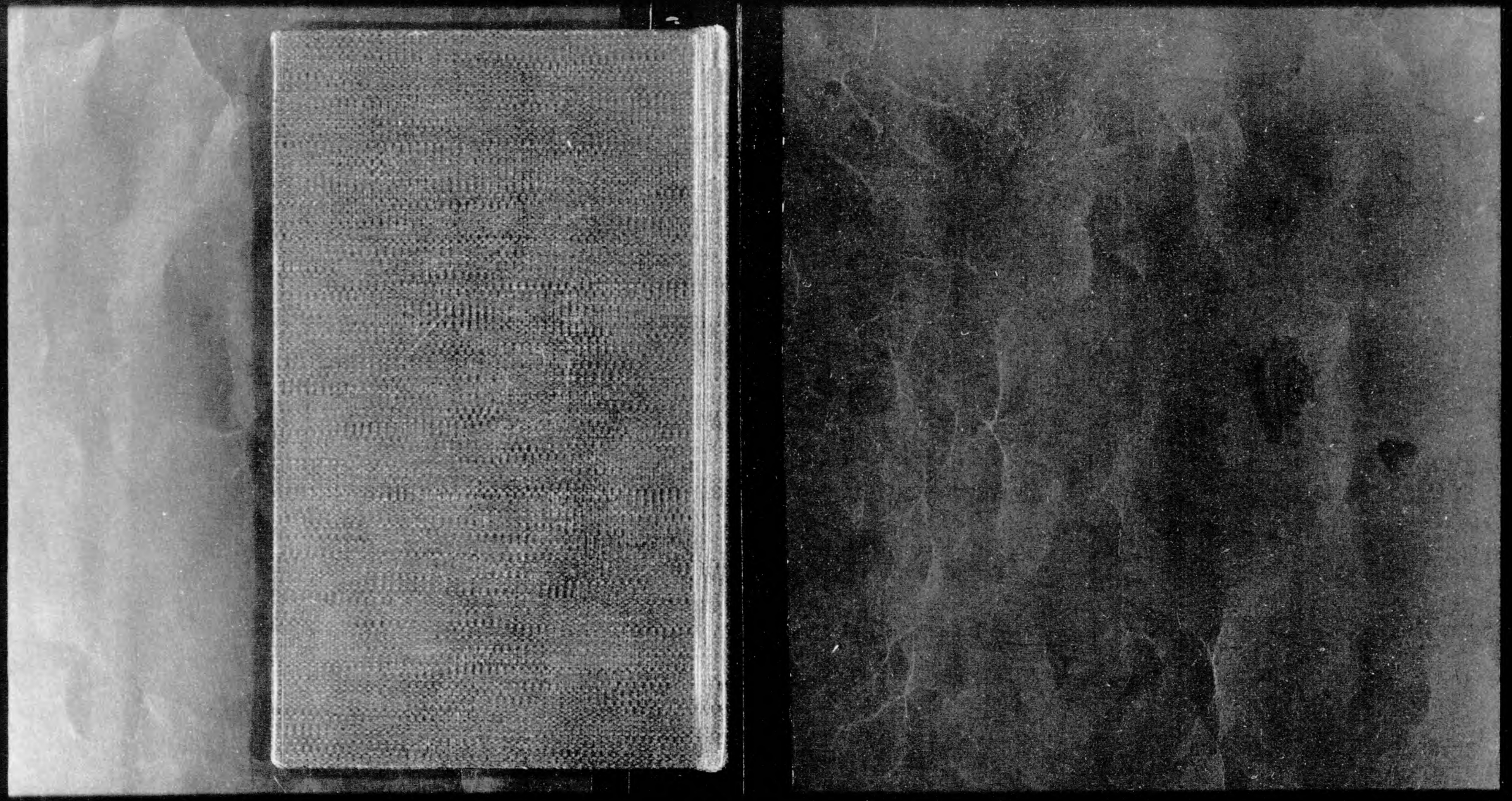
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